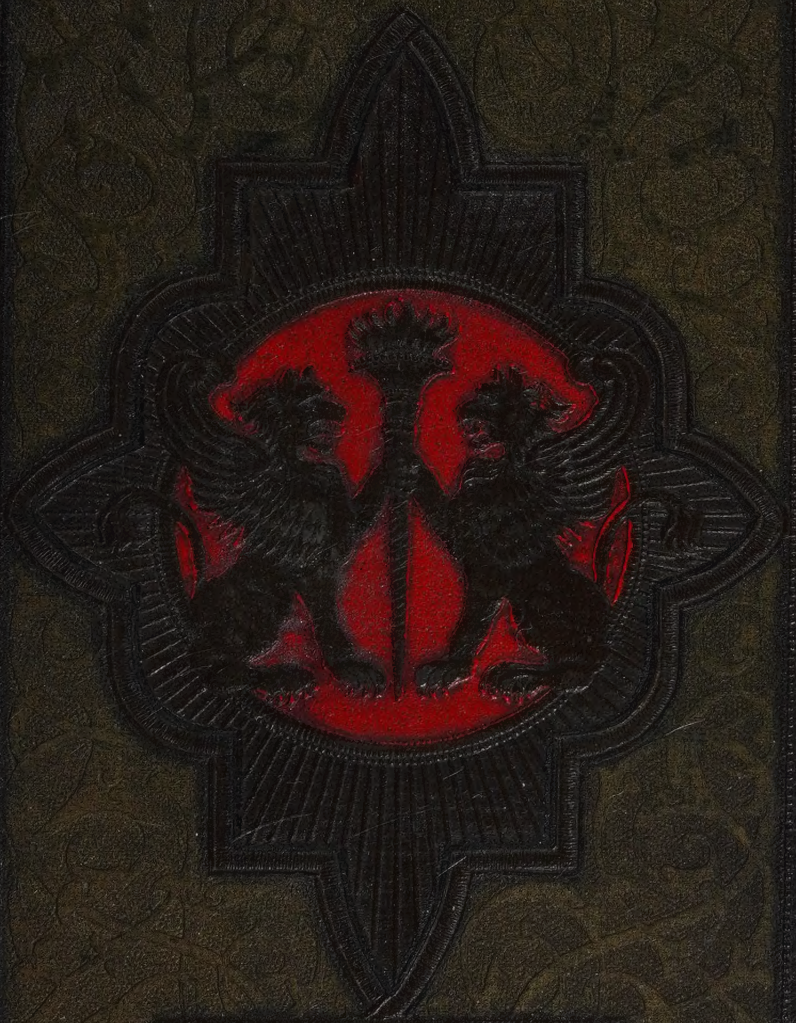

Balzac

The Complete Novelettes of Honore de Balzac

In One Volume

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

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The Girl With Golden Eyes

(*La Fille aux Yeux d'Or*)

To Eugène Delacroix, Painter.

One of the most dreadful spectacles we may run across is the malignant aspect of a certain class of the Parisian populace; a class horrible to behold, pallid, yellow, tawny. Is not Paris a vast meadow incessantly stirred by a storm of whirling diverse interests, its crop of men mowed down by death, at an earlier age than elsewhere; whose faces are distorted, twisted, rent by all the passions of the soul and its desires, the venom of which is begotten in their brain; must they not rather be called masks than faces—lying masks of courage, masks of sorrow, masks of joy, masks of hypocrisy; all emaciated, each one stamped indelibly with the mark of a grasping covetousness? What for? For gold, or for pleasure?

Whatever observations on the Paris mind may be made, it is easily explainable how the cadaverous physiognomy is come by in either of its ages—youth or decay. Its youth is a pallid youth devoid of color, a weakness painted over to appear young. Strangers who are not given to reflection may on their first impressions, most likely, give forth an opinion of dislike for this capital, this great factory of enjoyment, whence, they think to themselves, they will shortly be glad to escape; let them but remain and they will soon assume the same deformed shape as the rest. But few words are needed to depict the always infernally tinted Parisian brand; this is not all pleasantry nor raillery, for Paris in summer may justly take the name of hell. This is a fact. It is all smoke, all scorch, all sparkle, all broil, all flame; one perspires, one is dull, revives, sparkles, crackles, and dies out. Never life in any country is hotter or more afflicted. All social nature is in a state of fusion, as it were; after finishing a task, one says: "To another!" So Nature says likewise to herself. Like unto nature, society, social nature, busies itself with insects, with the flowers of a day, with trifles, fancies, and, like it, also vomits fire and flame from its everlasting crater. Perhaps, before analyzing the cause of this cast of feature peculiar to each class of this intelligent, hustling people, it might be better to describe the general reason for that particular class who disclose faces with that pale, blueybrownish appearance, not as individuals but a clan.

All take interest in courage, but the Parisian finishes by not being interested in anything. The lack of a dominant sentiment on each face is due to friction; it becomes gray, like the plaster of a house upon which are discharged all kinds of dust and smoke. In reality, like the old woman who so long as she can get drunk to-morrow does not care where, so the Parisian remains a child whatever his age may be. He grumbles at everything, he consoles everything, he mocks everything, forgets all, wishes all,

tastes of all, clutches all with passion, leaves all with nonchalance; his kings, his coquettes, his glory, his idols, whether they be of bronze or glass; the same as he throws away his old stockings, his hats, and his fortune. In Paris, each feeling that is unresisted goes in the run of things, and their course can only be changed by a hard tussle, which loosens the passions: there love is a desire and hate is welcomed; he has no more a real parent than he has a thousand-franc bill; no other friend than the pawnshop. The abandoned have the door, and become the fruits of the street; these peoples are not absolutely useful nor altogether useless; there is always room for such, in the salon as in the street; blockheads and rogues, people of spirit or of probity.

Everything is tolerated—the Government and the guillotine, religion and the cholera. You are agreeable to all the world; you are not wanted there at all. Which, then rules in this country without morals, without belief, without sentiment, but which, on the other side, embraces all the sentiments, all the beliefs, and all the morals? Gold or pleasure! Take these two words as a light and run over this great plaster cage, this swarm of black kennels, and there see the young serpents of agitation, of insurrection, of fermentation! Look. Examine the arrival of that world which has nothing!

The worker, the proletarian, the man who stirs his feet, his hands, his tongue, his back, his one arm, his five fingers, to live; eh, well, the former must needs practice economy, it is the first principle of his life; he overdoes his strength, he harnesses his wife to some machine, he wears out his child by a too close sticking of him at the wheel. The manufacturer, by what secondary thread I know not, nor who it is that sets him in motion to stir this people who, with their dirty hands, turn and gild porcelain, sew coats and dresses, hammer out iron, carve wood, bend steel, blend together hemp and yarn, imitate flowers, embroider woolen, do hair-dressing, stamp bronze, make crystal wreaths, plait leather and lace, cut copper, paint carriages, trim off the old-young elms, steam cotton, blow glass, cut diamonds, polish metals, transform leaves into marble, highly finish flints, design toilets, color, whiten, and blacken everything; well, the little boss is to soon arrive in this world of sweat and will promise a study of patience, an excessive salary, be it in the name of the town's fancy or be it in the name of a monster named Speculation.

Then, these quadrumanes are ever on the alert, they pine, labor, swear, fast, march; all these weary themselves for gain which fascinates them. Afterward, careless of the future, greedy for enjoyment, relying on their strong right arm as does the painter on his palette; they sport, great lords of one day, and on Monday all their money is in the taverns, which melt down the begettings in the slush of the town; girdled with the most immodest Venus, incessantly being closed and unclosed, where they are lost like the sport of fortune which this people periodically becomes, first ferocious in pleasure, then quiet at work. Therefore during five days each performs his assigned part in Paris! He books his movements to a shuffle, he swells, grows lean, pallid, spouts out a thousand

schemes for his promotion. Afterwards his pleasure, his repose is the weariness following a debauch; brown of skin, black with bruises, sallow with drunkenness or yellow from indigestion, who knows not from one day to another whence shall come his future bread, the week's soup, his wife's clothes, or dresses for the child who is all in rags. These men, under the force of circumstances, born, doubtless, beautiful beings (for all creation is relatively beautiful), are, in their infancy, regiments under the command of Might, under the reign of the hammer, of shears, of the cotton-mill, and become quickly vulcanized. Vulcan, with all his ugliness and his strength, is he not the emblem of this ugly yet strong race, sublime in their mechanical intelligence, patient for the most part, terrible one day in a century, as inflammable as powder and prepared for an incendiary revolution by brandy, and yet so intelligent in thought as not to kindle at a word captiously spoken which signifies naught to them: Gold or Pleasure!

In trying to understand all those who hold out their hands to charity for their legitimate wage, where five francs agree with every genus of Parisian prostitution, and all his money is well or evil-gained, these people count up to three hundred thousand individuals. Only for the taverns would not the Government be overthrown every Tuesday in the year? Fortunately, on Tuesday, this people is dull, their pleasure is boxed up, they have not as much as a sou, they return to work, to dry bread, stimulated thereto by a lack of material for procreation, to which they become accustomed. Nevertheless, these people are phenomena of virtue, these real men, these unknown Napoleons, who are the type of their strength and endurance in their highest expression, and resume their social duties in an existence where thoughts and movements combine less for throwing pleasure to them than for the regulating of their acts of sorrow.

The chances are that this workman has saved, it is equally a chance that he gratifies his fancy, he has been able to cast his eyes into the future, he has met a woman, he has found that he is a father, and, after some years of hardship and privations, he ventures a little traffic in haberdashery and notions, renting a little store. If neither illness nor vice arrest him on his way, if he is prosperous, here is a rough sketch of this normal life.

But first salute this king of the moving Parisian, who holds the submission of time and space. Yes, salute this being composed of saltpeter and gas, who gives the children of France their nights of toil, increasing during the day the number in his service; the renown and pleasure of its citizens. This man solves the problem of sacrificing at the one time to an amiable wife, his household, the *Constitutionnel,* his office, the National Guard, the opera, and God; but he does not object to turn into crowns the *Constitutionnel,* his office, the opera, the National Guard, his wife, and God. Therefore bow before this indefatigable jack-of-all-trades. Ending every day at five o'clock, he flies like a bird along the distance that separates him from his home in the Rue Montmartre. Whether it thunders or blows, rains or snows, he is off to the office of the *Constitutionnel* to attend to the sale of that journal, of which he has charge of the distribution.

Indoors and out he vends this political bread with gusto. By nine o'clock he is in the bosom of his household, he retails a joke to his wife, steals a smacking kiss as payment, tastes a cup of coffee, or growls at his children. At a quarter before ten he appears at the mayor's office. There, perched on a chair like a paroquet on his pole, the stoker of the town of Paris, until four o'clock he writes down the deaths and births of the whole of the arrondissement without giving a tear of grief. The joys and the sorrows of the quarter pass under the nib of his pen, as but lately the spirit of the *Constitutionnel* journeyed on his shoulders. He gives heed to nothing. He is always right in his own eyes, he takes his patriotism as he finds it in the paper, he disputes no one, he hisses or applauds with the rest of the world; he's a bird. At some little trouble in his parish he may, in case it is an important ceremony, leaves his work to a supernumerary and go to sing a Requiem in the lectern of the church, of which he is, on Sundays and Saints' days, the most distinguished ornament; his voice is most imposing when he energetically twists his big mouth to thunder forth a joyous *Amen*. He is the cantor. Free of his official duties at four o'clock, he proceeds to distribute pleasure and amusements in the precincts of his store, the most famous in the city.

Happy is his wife; he has no time in which to be jealous; he is more the man of action than sentiment. So, from the time he comes to allure the demoiselles of the counter, whose sparkling eyes wheedle their customers; who rejoice in the bosom of finery, fichus, lawns, all fashioned by these makers of clothing, or more especially so before their dinner hour, for he makes a practice of giving a page in the journal to be copied, or to open the door instead of the doorkeeper, to cause some delay. At six o'clock, for the whole of two days, he is faithfully at his post. Unremovable counter-tenor of the chorus, he is found at the opera quite ready to become a soldier, Arab, prisoner, savage, peasant, ghost, the foot of a camel, a lion, demon, genie, slave, a black or white eunuch, always well versed in the play presented; of its sorrows, its pities, its astonishments, to scream out its invariable shrieks, to keep silent, to hunt, to fight, to represent Rome or Egypt; but always, *in petto*, the haberdasher. At midnight he becomes again the good husband, man, and tender father; he glides into the conjugal stream, his imagination is again intent on the lissome figures of the nymphs of the opera, and makes him turn, to the benefit of conjugal love, the depravities of that world and the round, voluptuous legs of La Taglioni. In fact, if he sleeps, his sleep is lively, and he dispatches his slumber like he dispatches his life. Is it not this incessant motion that makes the man, distance incarnate, the Proteus of civilization? This man embraces everything: history, literature, politics, government, religion, militarism, art. Is he not a living encyclopedia, a grotesque Atlas, incessantly on the march, like Paris, which knows not repose? To him everything is legs. No physiognomy can be kept pure in all this toil. Perhaps the worker, who dies an old man at thirty years of this, his stomach tanned by his successive doses of brandy, has been able to find, to speak of him as some philosophers speak of an income,

no more happiness than when he was a haberdasher. But perhaps, on the other hand, he has made a successful stroke. Of his eight trades, of his shoulders, his throat, his hands, of his wife and his business, he retires from the latter. Many go on farms, with their children and some thousand francs, and there find the more laborious pleasure which always recreates the heart of man. This fortune and these children, or the children who remain to him from the prey of the superior world, he takes into his gate with his crowns and his daughter, the while his son is being educated at college, who, obtaining more education than had ever been his father's, casts ambitious looks on a higher sphere. Very frequently the youngster of a little trader will become of some object in the State.

This ambition brings us to the thoughts on the second of the Parisian spheres. Whether he has climbed up a story and gone into the entresol, or has descended from the garret and stops on the fourth floor, he at length penetrates into the world somehow; the result is the same. The wholesale merchants and their boys, their employés, the people of the young bank and of great honesty, the dishonest, the lost souls, the first and the last salesmen, clerks of the bailiff, the lawyer, the notary, in fact, all the assistant members, thinkers, speculators of the lower middle-class who triturate the doings of Paris and watch over its gains, monopolize its commodities, control the products manufactured by the working-people, barrel up the fruits of the South, the fish of the sea, the wines of all bank-sides loved by the sun; who spread their hands over the Orient, and scornfully take the shawls of the Turks and Russians; they reap the crops of the far-off Indies, which, as they sleep, are brought to their mart; look after their profits, count their stock, alter and increase their prices; they pack up the whole of Paris in detail, the carriage, the games of children, spy out the caprices and vices of ripe age, and wring out their maladies; well, without drinking brandy like the workman does, are they not flung to the vultures outside the barriers, all the time going beyond their strength—going further than the weight of their body permits, and their morals in addition; their desires dried up, their fast pace abated. At home, the physical tension caused by the lash of interest, under the flail of ambition which torments the world, raises in this monstrous city, the same as the workman is forced under the cruel weight of material elaborations by his incessant desires and the despotism of the "I WILL" aristocrat. There the same, odedient to the same universal master, pleasure or gold, he must devour time, is pressed for time, finding more than twenty-four hours in the day and night, he is unnerved, is killed, sells thirty years of old age for two years of sickly repose. The only difference—the workman dies in a hospital, when his last stunted term is done, while the bourgeois persists to breathe and live, but is cretinish.

You have encountered the drawn face, flat, old, without light in the eyes, without firmness on the feet, dragging on the boulevard, with a dull, expressionless air, the ceinture of his Venus, of his cherished town. What do the bourgeois want? The steel of the National Guard, an immutable *pot-au-feu,* a decent place in

Père-Lachaise cemetery, and, for their old age, a little gold legitimately earned. His Monday, to him, is Sunday; his rest is the promenade of a carriage in the coach-house; his champagne supper depends on how his wife and children joyfully swallow the coal-dust where they roast in the sun; the barrier is his restaurant in which he finds the venomous dinner of so wide renown, or some family ball in which he stifles until midnight.

Some simpletons are as much astonished as Saint-Guy when they are shown the animalculæ that a microscope makes visible in a drop of water, but yet say that the Gargantua of Rabelais, the type of an incomprehensible, sublime audacity, how this giant, fallen from a celestial sphere, amuses himself in contemplating the doings of this second Parisian life; you know the formula, eh? Have you seen their little barracks, cold even in summer, without any other fireplace than an earthen foot-warmer in winter, placed under the vast dome of copper that covers the corn-market. "Madame is there in the early morning, she is the factotum of the Market and gains by her trade twelve thousand francs per annum," says one. Monsieur, when madame has left, passes into a little, dark office ready at hand, where he loans by the *little week* to the traders of that quarter. At nine o'clock he is found at the Bureau of Passports, where he is one of the second-clerks. That evening he is in a box at the Théâtre-Italiens, or some other theater which he chooses for his pleasure. His children are put out to nurse, and afterward to college or in a boarding-school. Monsieur and madame dwell on a third-floor flat, they don't keep a cook, giving their balls in a salon twelve feet by eight, and lighted with an argand lamp; but they give one hundred and fifty thousand francs to their daughter, and rest themselves, at fifty years of age, by taking in the opera, going in a carriage to Longchamp in a faded toilet; in every sunshiny hour they promenade the boulevards or climb the steps of the fortifications. Respected in the quarter, a friend of the Government, allied to the higher middle-classes, monsieur, at sixty-five, obtains the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and the father of his father-in-law, the mayor of the arrondissement, is invited to his soirées.

All his work in this life is done to the profit of his children, whom this bourgeoisie fatally endeavors to raise to a higher social rank. Each sphere still throws its spawn into a superior one. The son of a rich grocer is made a notary, the son of a lumber merchant becomes a lawyer. Not one tooth of them all but wants to bite out a new furrow, all stimulate the ascending movement by the use of money.

We have now drawn a third circle in this hell, which perhaps, some day, will have its Dante. In this third social circle, a species of Parisian stomach in which are digested the interests of this city, and where it is there condensed under the form called "affairs," stirred and agitated, a sharp and rancorous intestinal movement of the crowd of lawyers, doctors, notaries, barristers, agents, bankers, wholesale merchants, speculators, judges. We meet still more of the causes of the destruction, physical and moral, everywhere we go.

This living people, almost all, in the infected studios, in the stiff audience halls, in the little railed-off offices, pass

the day bent under the weight of business, rising at the break of day to be in time, not to allow anyone to rob him, to gain all or not to lose, to seize a man or his money, to make or unmake a bargain, to take advantage of a furtive opportunity, to hang or acquit a man. This reacts on their horses, which become broken-down, overdriven, aged, like themselves, long before their time. Time is their tyrant: when they need it, it is flown away; they cannot expand it or control it. Some soul remains great, pure, moral, generous, and, consequently, some face dwells beautiful in the depraving exercise of a trade by which he is compelled to support his portion of the public miseries; does he analyze, ponder, estimate the proper rule and model?

Where does this people dispose of their heart? I don't know; but they leave some portion, when they have one, before they go down every morning, in the depths of the poignant pains of their families. As for them, the point of the mystery, they see the hell of that society of which they are the confessors, and which they scorn. Now, what has made them besmear themselves with that corruption at which they are horrified and sorrowful for? whence by lassitude and some secret transaction they marry; indeed, it is necessary for them, they are so vitiated in all their feelings, they are so far from men and their institutions, from the source of which they fly like the bloom on cadavers while they are still warm. At every hour the man of money hangs on to life; the man of wedding-contracts hangs on death; the man of law hangs his conscience. Compelled to speak without cessation, ever replacing the idea by the word, the sentiment by the phrase, their soul becomes a larynx. They use it to demoralize.

Neither the great merchant, nor the judge, nor the barrister can preserve their right senses: they no longer possess them; they only apply to everything their own rules, which are essentially false. Carried away by the torrent of their life, they possess neither brides, fathers, nor lovers; they slide like a sled on the snows of existence, and, every hour they live, are jostled by the business of this great city. When they return to their homes they are under requisition to attend a ball, the opera, or some festival, or, possibly, they have an engagement with some client whom by their knowledge they can protect. To this terrible expenditure of intellectual force they oppose no genuine relaxation, save such as are insipid and afford no real contrast, such as a debauch or a frightful, secret dissipation; for they dread the scandal of the world and dare not affront society. Their immoderate eating, playing, watching, bloat their faces, which become flat and coppery in color. Their actual dullness of comprehension is hidden under a special science. They know their trade, but are ignorant of all else; then, to save appearances, they put it out of the question, criticising it as wrong and irregular; in appearance doubters, but in reality simpletons, wearing their spirits by interminable discussions. Almost everyone adopts convenient social prejudices, for each is of the same opinion in dispensing with all things literary and political, the same as they place their consciences under the shelter of the Code or the Tribunal of Commerce.

Partly by the good-luck of being remarkable men, those who have deviated from the mediocrities crawl to the top of the tree. Their faces are of a pale and vinegary aspect, with an unnatural coloring: their eyes are tarnished and in deep circles; their loquacious, sensual mouths, in which the observer recognizes the debasement of their thoughts and the rotation in the circle of a specialty which kills off all the generative faculties of the brain, the boon of seeing afar, of generalizing and deducing. They are nearly all shriveled in the furnace of their business. But there is not a man lashed to or caught in the hopper or cog-wheels of these immense machines that fears he will not become great.

If he is a doctor or has a smattering of medicine, or he has made some cure, he is a Bichat who dies young. If a great merchant, he neglects some business, he is nearly a Jacques Cœur. Did Robespierre practice? Danton was his slothful follower. But who has ever envied the figures of Danton and Robespierre, however sublime or powerful they appeared? So, likewise, the ambition of the workman is that of the middle-classes. In Paris vanity includes every passion. The type of this class is seen in the ambitious bourgeois, who, after a life of worry and continuous scheming, passes on to the Council of State, as ants file through a fissure; some being editors of newspapers, profligate in schemes, that the King may make them peers of France, perhaps to avenge themselves on the nobility; some being notaries become mayors of their arrondissement; everyone flattered by their business and who, when they arrive at their goal, arrive *killed*. In France custom enthroned the wig. Napoleon, Louis XIV., the great kings, are only the leaders of the young people to fill out their designs.

Above this sphere is the world of art. But there, again, the visages marked with the seal of originality are nobly bowed, but broken, fatigued, sinuous. Wearied by a desire to create, exceeding their expensive whims, fatigued by a devouring genius, famished for the lack of pleasure, the artists of Paris risk all to win back by excessive toil the omissions left by their slothfulness; they vainly search to conciliate the world and glory, money and art. In commencing, the artist does not pant under the creditor; but his needs bring forth debts, and his debts demand his nights. After toil, pleasure. The comedian plays up to midnight, studying all the morning, repeating his lines at noon; the sculptor lies prone under his statue: the journalist is a thought on march, like a soldier in war; the painter who is the fashion is overwhelmed with work; the painter without connection has his heart gnawed if he is a man of genius. His competitors, rivals, calumniators assassinate his talent. Some, desperate, rush into the abyss of vice; others, young and ignorant, too quickly discount their future. Few of these faces, originally sublime, retain their nobility. Some few, though, retain the radiant beauty of their head without debasement. The face of an artist is always anomalous, it is ever above or beneath conventional lines, for this is what idiots term this ideal beauty. What power of destruction! What passion! All passion in Paris blends in two terms! gold and pleasure.

Now, why don't you respire? Is it

that you feel there is not space enough for the air to be purified? Here is neither labor nor pains. By whirling up the spiral stairs gold has gained the summit. Out of the depths of the sighs where their gutter begins; out of the depths of the workshops in which stay the wretched bastards; in the heart of the counting-rooms, behind the gratings of iron-rails, gold, without figuring on marriage-portions or inheritances, is grasped by the hands of young girls or the bony hands of old men, gushing out toward the aristocratic folk, where it glitters, displays itself, and streams away.

But before quitting the four quarters upon which all the wealth of Paris is based, it is fitting, having pointed out the moral causes, to deduce those which are physical, and to bring under observation a pestilence, dormant, as it were, which constantly acts upon the faces of the janitor, the storekeeper, the workingman; plainly speaking of a deleterious influence whose corruption nearly equals that of the Paris administration which complacently permits it to exist.

If the atmosphere of the houses in which live the greater part of the middle-class is infected, if the atmosphere of the streets spews out cruel miasmas into the back-shops where the air is rarefied, realize that, apart from this pestilence, the forty thousand houses of this great city have their foundations in filth, which the powers that be have not yet seriously attempted to inclose in walls of concrete solid enough to prevent even the most fetid mire from filtering through the soil, poisoning the wells, and continuing underground to Lethe, its famous name. Half of Paris sleeps in the putrid exhalations of courts, of low, close streets.

But now to the great salons, airy and light; the mansions with gardens; high society, idle, happy, rich. There the faces are emaciated and gnawed by vanity. There, nothing is genuine. They seek pleasure; do they not find weariness? People of the world founder very early in life. They have no other occupation than to manufacture enjoyment; they very speedily destroy their senses by this, the same as the workman destroys his by brandy. Pleasure is like certain medical substances; to constantly obtain the same effect it becomes necessary to double the dose, and death or stupidity is the final doom. All the lower classes sprawl before the wealthy and spy out their tastes so that they may imitate their vices and exploits. How can one resist the constant seductions that are woven in this country? So Paris has its *thériakis*,[1] for which it plays; and gluttony or courtesans are its opium. So you see to this people happiness is a question of taste and not a passion; it is a romantic fantasy of chilly love. There impotence reigns; there most of their ideas are as listless as the energies of the affectations of the boudoir are feminine make-believes.

There are beardless boys of forty, there are old doctors of sixteen. The wealthy of Paris take their intelligence ready made, their science all masticated, every opinion as formulated; they dispense with real science, spirit, and opinion. In the world their unrighteousness is equal to their feebleness and to their libertin-

[1] A medicinal herb, mentioned by Bacon.

ism. They become miserly of the time as they lose their strength.

They cannot find as many affections as ideas. Their greetings are covered in a profound indifference, and their politeness is continuous scorn. They never love others. By their witless sallies, their countless indiscretions, by their gossip, by all these they consider themselves above the commonalty: for of such depth is their language. But these unfortunate "happy" ones pretend not to know that they resemble in speech and manner the truths taken from La Rochefoucauld's works; as if such a thing could not exist in their midst, in this nineteenth century, as a junction of the ever-full and an absolute void. Should some man use a pleasantry that is bright and witty, it is incomprehensible; they soon fatigue with giving without receiving, they stay at home and are content to remain in the kingdom of fools for their possession.

This hollow life, this continual waiting for pleasure that never arrives, this chronic weariness, this inanity of the spirit, the heart, and the brain, this lassitude of the great Parisian assemblies, reproducing time and again all these traits, making their cardboard faces, their premature wrinkles, this physiognomy of wealth or the grin of impotence, is the reflection of the gold, or the flown intelligence.

This view of Paris morals proves that the physical Paris cannot be other than it is. This city which wears the diadem of queen, always majestic, is envied furiously and irresistibly. Paris is the head of the whole world, a brain which craves genius and guides human civilization; a great man, an artist incessantly creating, or, on further thoughts, a politician who must necessarily have wrinkles in his brain; here are the vices of the great man, the fantasies of the artist, and the criticisms of the politician. His physiognomy undergoes a germination of good and of evil, the combat and the victory; the moral war of '89, whose trumpet sound still re-echoes in every corner of the world; and likewise the troubles of 1814. That city cannot become more moral, nor more cordial, nor more correct unless copper-bound, like those fireworks whose gushing waves you so admire. Is not Paris a noble vessel loaded with intellect? Yes, her arms sometimes are oracles that permit fatalities. The City of Paris has a tall mast, all of bronze, sculptured with victories, and has for its lookout man Napoleon. That shipwreck sent her pitching and rolling; but she still plows the world, she makes fire in the hundred rings around her tribunes, she still labors in the seas of science, she bides her time, and cries aloud from the mast-head by the voice of her savants and artists: "Forward, march! follow me!"

She carries an immense array of new streamers which she has made to dress the ship. There are ship-boys and urchins laughing in the shrouds; heavy bourgeoisie form the ballast; workmen and sailors pay out the tar; in her state-rooms the happy passengers; elegant midshipmen smoke their cigars as they lean against the rail; on deck her soldiers, recruits or veterans, who vault aboard at every port, and, all willing to give their lives, asking glory what is pleasure; or of lovers, why wish for gold.

Therefore the excessive action of the proletariat, the depravity of interests

which bruise the two classes of bourgeoisie, the hardships of the artists of genius, and the incessant excess of pleasure sought after by the great, explain the normal deformity of the Parisian countenance.

The Orientals only, of the whole human race, offer a magnificent portrait; but it is the effect of constant calmness caused by those profound philosophies over a long pipe, cross-legged, a twisted turban on head, which contemplates every movement with horror; while those of Paris, stunted (big and little), run, leap, and caper, scourged by an unpitying goddess, Necessity: the necessity of money, glory, and amusement. So, some fresh face, reposed, gracious, really young, is a most extraordinary exception: it is but rarely met with.

If you see one, be assured that it belongs to: a young, fervent priest or to some good, octogenarian abbé, with a triple chin; to some young person of pure nature, as is sometimes raised in certain bourgeois families; to a mother of twenty, still full of illusions, as she suckles her first-born; to a young man freshly arrived from the provinces, confided to a devoted dowager who is left without a sou; or to some shop-boy, who goes to bed at midnight, thoroughly tired out with wrapping up or unwrapping calico, and who rises at seven to clean out the store; or, frequently, to a scientific man or a poetical one, who lives a sober life, quiet and chaste; or to some simpleton, satisfied with himself, nourished by his own foolishness, guzzling health, always occupied in smiling to himself; or to the happy and equable lounger species, the only really happy people in Paris, and who taste each hour the newest poesies.

However, there is in Paris one privileged class of beings who profit by this incessant motion of manufacturing interests, business, or the arts, and of gold. These beings are the women. While some even of these have a thousand secret causes, more here than elsewhere, which shall destroy their faces, still he encounters in the feminine world a little, happy tribe which lives the life of the Orientals, and these preserve their beauty; but these women are rarely seen afoot in the streets, they live concealed, like those rare plants which display their lovely petals only at certain hours, and constitute veritable exotic exceptions. Still, Paris is essentially the country of contrasts. If noble sentiments are rare there, they may yet be met with, together with boundless devotion. On this battlefield of interests and passions, in the midst of society marching along in the triumph of egoism, where each is compelled to defend himself alone, and whom we call to arms, it seems most pleasant when it is encountered and becomes sublime by its juxtaposition.

So of faces. In Paris, at times, in the higher aristocracy we find some trace of the same ravishingly clear faces, the fruits of exceptional education and environments. The youthful beauty of English blood thoroughly blended in Southern features and united to French intelligence and purity of form. The fire of their eyes, the delicious redness of their lips, the black luster of their fine hair, a white skin, a distinguished cast to the face, render them the beautiful flowers of humanity, sublime when seen in contrast with the mass of other

physiognomies—wan, drawn, wizened, crooked, grinning So women immediately express their admiration of these young people with that greedy pleasure which makes men turn to look at a pretty person; becoming, gracious, embellished with all the virginities with which our imaginations can wish to decorate the perfect girl.

If this rapid glance over the population of Paris has caused you to realize the rarity of a Raphaelistic face, and the passionate admiration that the first sight of one incites, the principal interest of our story will be fully justified. *Quod erat demonstrandum,* this is what is demonstrated, if it be allowed to apply scholastic formulæ to the science of manners.

Now, on one of those lovely mornings in spring, when the leaves are not yet green, although unfolded, when the sun begins to lighten up the roofs and when the sky is blue, when the populace of Paris come out of their shells, come buzzing on to the boulevards, gliding along like a serpent of a thousand colors, by the Rue de la Paix toward the Tuileries, saluting the splendors of wedlock which has recommenced its campaign; on one of these delightful days, then, a young man, as handsome as the day, this very day, dressed with taste, easy in manner, spoken of in secret as a love-child, the natural son of Lord Dudley and the famous Marquise de Vordac, was premenading the Broad Walk in the Tuileries.

This Adonis, named Henri de Marsay, brought to France, whither Lord Dudley came to marry that young person, already the mother of Henri, to an old gentleman named M. de Marsay. This coxcomb, colorless and almost quenched, recognized the child as his own by receiving the usufruct in an interest of one hundred thousand francs; definitely describing him as his putative son; a folly which did not cost much to Lord Dudley, the French Funds being then valued at seventeen francs fifty centimes.

The old gentleman died without having known his wife. Mme. de Marsay afterward married the Marquis de Vordac; but, before she became marquise, she was rather uneasy about her and Lord Dudley's son. Just then war was declared between France and England, which separated the two lovers, and her faithfulness, "ever the same," was not nor ever will be in style in Paris.

Then the successes of an elegant woman, pretty, universally admired, dulled in the Parisian all maternal feeling. Lord Dudley was not more careful of his offspring than was his mother. The quick infidelity of the young, ardent girl he loved had, perhaps, given a sort of aversion to everything connected with her life. It may perhaps be thought that fathers do not love their children to whom they give an ample acknowledgment; now social belief is of the utmost importance for the repose of families; that is why all bachelors hold the one opinion that the paternal is a sentiment far higher than that grown in the hothouse of woman, and is shown by both custom and law.

Poor Henri de Marsay had never met his father now in heaven, that one of the two to whom he was not under obligations for his creation. The paternity of M. de Marsay was naturally very incomplete. These children are not, in the natural course of things, the children of

a father who is concerned for only a few passing moments; and that gentleman did but imitate nature. The good man had not sold his name to be deprived of his game. He ate without compunction of the free lunches provided at the gaming-houses, and aimed at using as little as possible of what was paid him each six months by the National Treasury.

He had raised the child of an elder sister, a Demoiselle de Marsay, and gave him, from the meager pension allowed him by his brother, a preceptor, an abbé without money or marbles, who measured out the future of the young man, and he resolved to pay him out of the hundred thousand livres of income for the care given to his pupil, to whom he had given his affection.

This preceptor he found by chance to be a true priest, one of those ecclesiastics cut out by nature for a cardinal in France, or a Borgia under the tiara. He taught the child three years and then placed him in college for ten years. Then this noble man, named the Abbé de Maronis, finished the education of his pupil by teaching him of civilization in its every phase. He nurtured him on his own experience; he drew him but little toward the Church, then in a ferment; he sometimes took him through the slums, more frequently to see the courtesans; he pulled human sentiment apart piece by piece; he roasted the politics of the day in its very citadel of the salon; he sized up the Government machinery, and, tempted by friendship for a noble nature which had been forsaken, endeavored to replace him in the affections of his mother. "The Church, is it not the mother of orphans?" answered the pupil of his cares.

This worthy man died a bishop in 1812; he had the profound gratification of leaving behind him under the heavens a child whose heart and spirit at sixteen could overthrow a man of forty. Who would expect to meet a heart of bronze, an alcoholic brain, under the most seducing figures of the old painters, those natural artists, who always painted a serpent in the terrestrial paradise? Still, this is nothing.

More, this good devil of a Violet had given his child a certain predilection in the knowledge of high society in Paris which can as speedily dissipate as produce, in the hands of a young man, another hundred thousand livres of income.

To conclude, this priest, wicked but politic, incredulous but wise, perfidious but amiable, feeble in appearance but as vigorous in body as mind, was really so useful to his pupil, so complaisant to his vices, so good a calculator of all his special powers, so deep when he came to gauge humanity, so young when at table, at Frascati's, at ——— you know where, that the grateful Henri de Marsay was hardly moved at aught in 1814, except when he looked at the picture of his dear bishop, the only thing that he had been able to bequeath him, this prelate, an excellent type of men, whose genius had saved the Catholic Church, Apostolic and Roman, momentarily compromised by the weakness of its recruits and the senility of its pontiff; but he wanted the Church!

The continental war prevented young de Marsay knowing his real father, of whom it was doubtful whether he knew his name. Naturally he had little regret

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The continental war prevented young de Marsay knowing his real father, of whom it was doubtful whether he knew his name. Naturally he had little regret

for his putative father. When Mlle. de Marsay, his only mother, had been taken to the cemetery of Pére-Lachaise, where she was buried under a very pretty little tombstone, Monseigneur de Maronis had promised to this coxcomb of a widow one of the best places in heaven, insomuch that, seeing the happiness of death, Henri abandoned tears that were egotistical and did a little weeping for himself. When the abbé saw this sorrow he dried the tears of his ward, bidding him observe that the good girl took plenty of fine snuff, and had become so ugly, so deaf, so irritable, that he ought to be thankful for her death. The bishop had emancipated his pupil in 1811. Then, when the mother of M. de Marsay remarried, the priest chose, in the family council, one of those honest, headless tetrarchs, whom he constrained through the confessional, and charged him to become the administrator of the fortune and apply the revenues thereof to the needs of the youngster, but he wished him to preserve the capital intact.

Toward the close of 1814, Henri de Marsay, not having anywhere on earth a sense of obligation to anyone, had the same freedom as a bird without companions. When he was twenty-two he would have passed for seventeen. Generally, his hardest rivals looked upon him as the prettiest boy in Paris.

From his father, Lord Dudley, he had taken those loving, deceitful blue eyes; from his mother, his black curly hair; from both, a pure blood, a skin like that of a young girl, a sweet and modest manner, a fine aristocratic waist, and particularly beautiful hands. For a woman to see him was to bring upon her a fit of lunacy; do you understand? Well, conceive one of those desires that gnaw the heart, but don't forget the fact of the impossibility of its being gratified, because the woman of Paris is generally without tenacity. Between themselves they say, after the manner of men, the motto of the house of Orange: JE MAINTIENDRAI.

Under this freshness of life, and in spite of the limpid water of his eyes, Henri had the courage of a lion, the cunning of a monkey. He could cut through a bullet on the edge of a knife at ten paces' distance; he rode a horse in a manner which seemed to realize the fable of the centaur; he could drive a carriage with all the grace of a great whip; he was as lively as a cherubin and as quiet as a sheep; but he could beat any man in the faubourg by the terrible play of his feet or his cudgel; then he could finger the piano, equaling in skill the best artists when he felt in the humor; and possessed a voice of such value that Barbaja would have earned at least fifty thousand francs each season by it. Alas! all these brilliant qualities, these pretty defects, were tarnished by a dreadful vice: he believed in neither men nor women, nor in God or the Devil. Capricious nature had begun this character, a priest had completed it.

So as to make this adventure understood, it is necessary to add here that Lord Dudley naturally found plenty of women anxious to have some examples and copies of this delicious portrait. His second *chef-d'œuvre* of this kind was a young girl named Euphémie, born of a Spanish lady, brought up in Havana, returning to Madrid with a young Creole from the Antilles, and every taste ruined in the colonies; but happily married to

an old and powerful wealthy Spanish lord, Don Hijos, Marquis of San-Réal, who, since the occupation of Spain by the French troops, had been living in Paris, residing on the Rue Saint-Lazare.

More out of indifference than out of respect for the innocence of youth, Lord Dudley did not point out to his children nor advise them as to whom their creator was, or of their relationship to him, for he had children everywhere. This is a trifling inconvenience in civilization; it has its advantages, but it also has its drawbacks; it is less favorable than unfortunate for its beneficiaries. Lord Dudley, of whom we have spoken so much, came in 1816 to Paris a fugitive from English justice, after he had been to the Orient as a supercargo. This lordly traveler asked, when he saw that beautiful young man, who he was. Then, after hearing the name:

"Ah! that is my son—what bad luck," said he.

This was the story of the young man who, toward the middle of the month of April 1815, nonchalantly paraded the Broad Walk of the Tuileries, after the manner of all those animals who, knowing their strength, march stridently along in majesty and peace. Women of the middle-class artlessly turned around to look at him again; other women did not turn themselves but awaited his return, and engraved in their memories, for an after reminiscence, that agreeable form which made the most beautiful among them seem but ugly in comparison.

"What are you doing here on Sunday?" said the Marquis de Ronquerolles to Henri as he passed.

"I'm sizing the fish in the pond," replied the young man.

This exchange of pleasantries was accompanied by two significant looks, and only for this it might have been thought that neither de Ronquerolles nor de Marsay had the air of being known to each other. The young man examined the loungers, with a quick, eager glance and sharp hearing that is particularly Parisian, and who seem at first sight to see nothing and hear nothing, but who in reality see all and hear everything. The young man now took him by the arm.

"Well, how goes it, my dear de Marsay?"

"Quite well," replied de Marsay, with a seeming affectionate manner, but which, between young Parisians, means nothing, neither for the present nor the future.

As a fact, the young people of Paris have no resemblance to the young folk of any other city. They are divided into two classes; the young man who has something and the young man who has nothing; or the young man who spends and the young man who saves.

But, and give this careful attention, the one who is drawn to Paris to go the delightful pace of high life does not act the same as he who is indigenous there. He lives there quite as well as other young men, but they are children who enter very late into Parisian existence and remain the dupes of their elders. They do not speculate, they study or they dig, say the others.

Of course there are some young men, rich or poor, who embrace careers and steadily follow them; there are a few Emile de Rousseaus, in the skins of citizens, who are never seen in society;

diplomatists, as they call these particular simpletons.

Whether they are simpletons or not they augment the number of nonentities and go to make up the population of France. They are always with us; ever ready at hand to botch public or private business with the flat trowel of mediocrity, boasting of their impotence, which they term morality and honesty. This species of the "prize of excellence" of society infest the administration, the army, the bench, the Chambers, the Court. They thin down and flatten the country and form, as it were, in the body politic, a lymph which overburdens it and renders it flabby. These honest people call men of genius flippant or immoral. So these same flippant folk pay the others for their poorly rendered services; they may be termed humbugs, but they are respected by the multitude; happily for France, though, these fashionable young men are unceasingly stigmatized as dudish blockheads.

Nevertheless, a mere glance suffices to assure us that there are two species of young men found in fashionable circles—that amiable body of which Henri de Marsay was a member. But observers who are not satisfied with a purely superficial view of things are soon convinced that the differences are purely of a moral nature, and that nothing is more apt to lead astray than a pretty exterior.

However, the whole world goes the pace just the same, speaking at random of things, men, literature, and art; mouthing "Pitt and Cobourg," each twelvemonth; interrupting conversation with a pun; turning to ridicule the learning of a scientist; scorning everything they do not understand and all they dread; they set themselves above everybody else, instituting themselves supreme judges of all things. They are always, and forever, mystifying their fathers and are at all times ready to rain down their crocodile tears on the bosoms of their mothers. As a rule, they believe in nothing; they slander women and chaff the modest, though they are really in subjection to dirty courtesans or some old rip of a woman. All of these are rotten to the bone, caused by their depravity, or have gravel, which is brought on by a brutish envy of preferment; if they are threatened with stone and are probed they are found to have an inside of marble.

In their normal state they are outwardly very amiable, but their friendship is only make-believe. The same slang dominates the every-changing jargon of their talk; they aim at the fantastical in their attire; their pride is in repeating the folly and nonsense of some popular actor or other, and they make their entrance with some silly pun or impertinence of his to in some sort display their knowledge of their idol; but woe to those who cannot understand them, for they are left with the outstarting eyes of astonishment. They seem equally indifferent to the woes and scourges of their country. They resemble, in fact, the pretty white foam which tips the waves of the ocean during a tempest. On the day of the battle of Waterloo they dressed, dined, danced, and amused themselves, and they do the like during the cholera or while a revolution is on. After all, they spent as much as at other times; but here begins the comparison. Of this floating fortune and agreeable waste, one is the capital, the others the

dependents thereon; they are the same journeymen, but the bills are settled by the former. Then if the one class, as it seems to those who study it, receive every kind of idea without keeping any, they are compared with those who assimilate all that is good. So those who think they know something, know nothing and understand all; they present all to those who are in need of nothing and offer nothing to those who lack anything; these secretly study the thoughts of the others and so place their money as to profit largely in their fortunes by the follies of the others. The one does not give a faithful impression of their soul on the countenance, because it is dulled as ice is by use and cannot give any reflection; but the others economize all their senses and life and show it, as one may say, through their windows.

The first, on the faith of a hope, are devoted without conviction to a system, which has the wind and sails with the current, but they skip to another political boat when the first begins to drift; the second plumb the future, they sound it and see in a faithful policy that which the English see in commercial probity—an element of success. But the young man who has something makes a pun or says something smart on the change of policy in the throne; those who have nothing make a public calculation, or meanly betray a secret, and attain all things by giving a hand to the grasp of their friends. The one never knows anything of the properties of other people, taking all their ideas for new, as if the world was on the watch for such; they have unlimited confidence in themselves, and have no enemy so cruel as themselves. But the others are armed with a continual mistrust of men whom they estimate at their real value, and are deep enough to have a thought that is deeper than that of their friends whom they exploit; then at night, when their heads are on their pillows, they weigh, like a miser, their pieces of gold.

The one are annoyed at an impertinence without brooding over it, and afford pleasure to the diplomatists who pose before them as pulling the principal wires of these puppets—self-love—while the others respectively choose their victims and protectors. Then some day it happens that those who have nothing now have something, and those that had something then have nothing now. Those who see their parvenu comrades in a position ascribe to them cunning and bad hearts, but also as being smart men. "They are very smart" is the great eulogy decreed to those who have reached, by hook or crook, a position in the Government, a wife, or a fortune. Among them are met certain young men who play this part, commencing with getting into debt, and, naturally, they are more dangerous than those who play the risky game without a sou.

The young man who was the intimate friend of Henri de Marsay was a giddy youth, just arrived from the provinces and at the time when young men were the fashion; he fully understood the art of eating up an inheritance, but he had a last cake to eat in the provinces, an inalienable estate. This was simply a small heritage, without transition, of his meager hundred francs per month allowed him from the paternal fortune, and which, if he had not had enough intelligence to perceive that they laughed at him, he knew enough to calculate on

stopping his career at two-thirds of his capital. He discovered in Paris, by means of some bills for a thousand francs, the exact value of harness, the art of not paying much respect to his gloves, which were ever extended as a token to people he met, and found that a contract was the better plan of dealing with them; he spoke powerfully and in good terms of his horses and his Pyrenean hounds; he learned to know, after the launch, to what species a woman belonged by her make-up and the appearance of her shoes; he studied *écarté,* learned some fashionable words, and conquered, by his sojourn in the Parisian world, the necessary authority to much later import into the provinces the taste for tea, plate in the English fashion, and so gave the right of those about him to scorn him for the rest of his days.

De Marsay had taken to his friendship to serve him in society, like a bold speculator employing a confidential clerk. This false or genuine friendship of de Marsay was a social position for Paul de Manerville, who, on his side, believing it was sincere and strong, exploited in his own manner his intimate friend. He lived in the reflection of his friend, he took him all the time under his umbrella, he had him in his stockings and his boots, he was gilded by his rays. When standing near Henri, the same as when walking by his side, he had the air of saying:

"Do not insult us, we are two tigers."

Very often he would allow himself to fatuously say:

"If I ask Henri such and such a thing, he is sufficiently my friend to make it known to me."

But he was very careful never to ask him anything. He was afraid, and his fear, although imperceptible, reacted on others and was of service to de Marsay.

"That de Marsay is a high-spirited man," said Paul. "Ah! you will see, he will make his mark. It will not astonish me to one day see him the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Nothing can prevent him."

Then he would make of de Marsay, the same as Corporal Trim made of his cap, one continual play:

"Ask de Marsay, and you will learn the truth."

Or, again:

"The other day de Marsay and I were hunting together, and he did not seem to think that I could clear a bush without my horse made a running start."

Or:

"De Marsay and I were at the home of some women, and, on my word of honor, I was——," and so forth.

So Paul de Manerville cannot be classed among that clan of great, illustrious, and powerful family of ninnies who come to Paris. He would some day become a deputy. At that time he was nothing more, nothing less, than many another young man.

His friend de Marsay thus defined him: "You ask me, who is this Paul? Why, this is Paul de Manerville."

"I am surprised, my boy, to see you here on Sunday," said he to de Marsay.

"I might make the same rejoinder."

"Have you an intrigue?"

"An intrigue."

"Bah!"

"I can tell you without compromising my passion. A woman that comes on Sunday to the Tuileries does not value aristocratic gossip."

"Aha!"

"Stop that or I tell you nothing. You laugh too loudly, one would think we had had a too hearty breakfast. Last Thursday, here, on the Terrasse des Feuillants, I was walking along just thinking of nothing. But when I reached the gate at the Rue de Castiglione, by which way I was going out, I found myself face to face with a woman, or rather with a young person, who, even if she had not clasped me round the neck, would, I think, have arrested me less out of humanity's sake than for the profound astonishment with which I was struck by her arms and legs, the latter of which ran from the backbone till stopped by the soles of the feet which were on the ground. I have often experienced from different people a kind of animal magnetism which became very strong at the moment when the affinity is respectively felt. But, my dear fellow, this was not a stupefaction, nor was this a common woman. Morally speaking, this face seemed to say: 'What! there is my ideal, the being of my fancy, of my dreams by day and night. How came he here? Why this morning? Why not yesterday? Take me, I am thine,' *et cætera!*

"'Good,' I said to myself, 'I will then look into this.' Ah! my dear fellow, talk of a figure! the unknown, this creature, is the most adorable woman I have ever met. She belongs to that variety of femininity that the Romans called *fulva flava,* the woman of flame. What most struck me at first sight, this one with whom I am so smitten has tawny eyes like those of tigers, yellow and luminous like living gold, of gold that thinks, of gold which loves and which you have absolutely in your arms."

"We know all about that, my boy!" exclaimed Paul. "She will come here again some time, this GIRL WITH GOLDEN EYES. She is a young woman in the neighborhood of twenty-two, and whom I have seen here in the time of the Bourbons, but with a woman who is a hundred thousand times better than herself."

"Hush! you, Paul. It is impossible that any woman can surpass that girl; she resembles a cat who wishes to come and rub against your legs; a pale girl with charcoal tresses, slight in appearance, who has soft threads for the third joint of her fingers; and whose full, rounded cheeks show a white down, whose lines, luminous as a lovely day, begin at the ears and are lost in the throat."

"Ah! but the other, my dear de Marsay. She shows eyes of midnight, not tearful but yet always brilliant; of black eyebrows which are joined and give her an air of giving the lie to the inflexibility expressed in the pucker of her lips, which seem to say that no kiss may ever settle there—such ardent, fresh lips, too. A warm complexion by which a man is scorched as by the sun; but, on my word of honor, she resembles you——"

"Flatterer."

"An arched waist, slender as a corvette, built for the chase, and which strikes the merchantman with a French impetuosity."

"Well, my dear boy, why cannot I see it from your point of view?" said de Marsay. "Since I have studied women my unknown has the only

maiden's bosom, the voluptuous and ardent form, the sole realization of the woman of my dreams, for me. She is the original of the delirious painting called *Woman Caressing a Chimera,* the hottest, most infernal inspiration of antique genius; a saint posing as a prostitute for those who copy her for their frescoes and mosaics; for a crowd of bourgeois who cannot see in this cameo anything more than a charm to attach to their watch-chain, whereas it is all woman, an abyss of pleasure down which one may roll without ever finding the end; and yet this is that ideal woman whom one sometimes sees in reality in Spain, Italy, and even occasionally in France.

"Well, I have reviewed this girl with golden eyes, this woman caressing a chimera; I have seen her here, on Friday. I presumed that she would come again the next day at the same hour; I am not mistaken in this. I am well able to remember her without seeing her, to study that indolent walk of the unoccupied woman; but yet who reveals in her movements a sleeping voluptuousness. Well, when she returns, I shall see her again, I shall worship her anew, and start and shiver afresh. Then, I have observed the genuine Spanish duenna who guards her, a hyena who wears her jealousy as a robe, some female demon well paid to watch that suave creature. I am becoming anxious to know whether the duenna may not be tempted to desert that lovely one. Saturday I was here again. This time I am here, and as she attends this girl of whom I am the chimera, I ask myself if I am doing anything better than posing as the monster of the fresco."

"Here she *is*!" said Paul, "everybody is turning around to look at her——"

The unknown blushed and her eyes scintillated as she perceived Henri; she stopped a moment, then passed on.

"What do you think of that?" cried Paul, pleasantly.

The duenna looked fixedly and with attention at the two young men. When the unknown and Henri again met each other, the young girl brushed with her hand against the hand of the young man. Then she turned toward them smiling with passion; but the duenna forcibly drew her toward the gate of the Rue de Castiglione.

The two friends followed the young girl, admiring the magnificent sinuosity of that neck where it joined the head by a combination of vigorous lines, which was relieved by some stray little curls of hair. The girl with golden eyes had finely formed feet, small and rounded, which lent an added attraction to a dainty imagination. She was also elegantly attired and carried her dress like one used to the Court. As she walked she would at times turn around to look at Henri, and seemed to dislike the old woman, who at times seemed to be her mistress while she was her slave. She could beat her unmercifully without receiving a blow in return. All reached the gate together, the two friends behind the others. Two liveried valets occupied the footboard of a coupé in elegant taste and showing a coat-of-arms. The girl with golden eyes first got in, taking that side which would be nearest the two friends as the vehicle turned around; she placed her hand on the curtains and waved her handkerchief, unknown to the duenna, mocking at the curious onlook-

ers but saying publicly, as she waved the handkerchief: "Follow me."

"Have you ever seen better play with a handkerchief than that?" said Henri to Paul de Manerville.

Then seeing a hack near by he went after the coupé, making a sign to the driver, saying:

"Follow that coupé, you shall have ten francs. Farewell, Paul."

The hack followed the coupé. That vehicle turned into the Rue Saint-Lazare and stopped at one of the handsomest mansions in the quarter.

De Marsay was not surprised. Every other young man would have obeyed a desire of at once taking some token of a girl who had realized so fully his ideas of the most luminous imprints of the women in Oriental poetry; but more adroit than to so compromise the future of his lucky fortune, he had the hack continue on down the Rue Saint-Lazare, and from there returned to his hôtel. The next day his head valet, named Laurent, a boy as wily as a Frontin of the old comedy, went around and about the house habited by the unknown, at about the time when the letters were distributed. So that he might have the chance of spying at his ease and roaming around the hôtel, he had, following the custom of police spies, disguised himself, buying the cast-off suit of an Auvergnat and trying to make his features resemble one. When the letter-carrier, who this morning did the service of the Rue Saint-Lazare, came by, Laurent pretended to be a commissionaire who was looking for some person's name for whom he had a parcel, and he asked the letter-carrier. Mistaken by his appearance, this so picturesque a personage in the midst of Parisian civilization, told him that the hôtel in which lived the girl with golden eyes belonged to Don Hijos, Marquis de San-Réal, a Spanish grandee. Naturally, the Auvergnat had no business with the Marquis.

"My parcel," said he, "is for the Marquise."

"She is away from home," replied the letter-carrier. "Her letters are returned to London."

"The Marquise has not a young girl who——?"

"Ah!" said the letter-carrier, interrupting the valet and looking attentively at him, "you are as much a commissionaire as I am a ballet-girl."

Laurent slipped some pieces of gold into the letter-carrier's hand, with a pleasant jingle which made him smile.

"There, that's the name of your quarry," said he, taking out of his leather-bag a letter bearing the London postmark, and which was addressed: *A Mademoiselle Paquita Valdès, Rue Saint-Lazare, Hôtel San-Réal, Paris,* written in long angular character which showed it was in a woman's hand.

"Could you punish a bottle of Chablis, with a chop and mushrooms, and preceded by about a dozen oysters?" said Laurent, who wished to secure the precious friendship of the letter-carrier.

"At half-past nine, when I have finished my round. Where?"

"At the corner of the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin and the Rue Neuve-des-Mathurins, at the Puits Sans Vin," said Laurent.

"Listen, my friend," said the functionary, as he joined Laurent, about an hour after their first meeting; "if your master is in love with that girl, he is under-

taking a big job. I doubt that you will be able to see her. For ten years I have been a letter-carrier in Paris and have made a pretty careful study of doors, but I can safely say, without fear of being thought crazy by my comrades, that I do not know a door so mysterious as the one of M. de San-Réal. No person can enter the hôtel without knowing the password; and you will further observe that it has been expressly selected for being in the center of the garden, so as to prevent all communication with other houses.

"The janitor is an old Spaniard who cannot speak one word of French, but who has a disfigured face, which is as keen as Vidocq's in learning who is who. If the first guard could be passed by a lover by any mistake, by a robber, or by yourself, which is most unlikely, then in the first hallway, which is closed by a glass-door, you would encounter a major-domo trotting around like a footman, an old joker, who is still more savage and morose than the janitor.

"If one jumps the coach-yard gate, my major-domo sallies out and interrogates you under the gallery, and subjects you to as much questioning as a criminal. This is what happens to me, a plain letter-carrier. I should have to take a 'hemisphere' for a disguise," said he, smiling at his joke and cocking his eye. "When people call who have no legitimate reason, I can't say how they will be treated, for no one in the quarter has ever had speech with them; I don't know but what they issue tokens for those to whom they will speak; they make themselves unapproachable, whether it is that fear of being shot or that they have staked some great sums to insure their discretion. If your master loves Mlle. Paquita Valdès enough to surmount these obstacles, even then he is not sure of triumphing over Doña Concha Marialva, the duenna, who accompanies her everywhere and who never quits her side. These two women present the appearance of being sewn together."

"That is what you tell me, my estimable letter-carrier," said Laurent, "after having swallowed your wine; you only confirm what I at first apprehended. On the faith of an honest man, I think you are making game of me. The fruit trees in front of the building—could not we get up them at night? but then I suppose dogs are kept from whom food has been withheld, so as to make them more wakeful and vicious. Those damned animals are quite capable of making a meal off one and spitting out the pieces. You speak of them being afraid of bullets, but it seems to me that they would stick at nothing."

"The porter at M. le Baron de Nucingen's place, whose garden adjoins the San-Réal mansion, says that one might as well try to reach the sky as that," said the letter-carrier.

"Good! my master knows him," said Laurent. "Do you know," he went on, leering at the letter-carrier, "that I belong to a master who is a man of high spirit, and, if he took it into his head, he would plant a kiss on the feet of an empress, and that he will find some means of passing through this? If he had need of you, and I desired you, for he is very generous, could we count on you?"

"Bless my heart, M. Laurent, my name is Moinot. Really my name is written

the same as a *moineau*[1]—M-o-i-n-o-t, Moinot."

"Just so," said Laurent.

"I live on the Rue des Trois-Frères, No. 11, on the fifth," continued Moinot. "I have a wife and four children. If you can show that there is nothing will hurt my conscience or interfere with my duty to the Government, you understand, I am yours."

"You are a brave fellow," said Laurent, pressing his hand.

"Paquita Valdès is undoubtedly the mistress of the Marquis de San-Réal, the friend of King Ferdinand. He is an old Spanish corpse, eighty years old, and is capable of taking every conceivable precaution," said Henri, when his valet had informed him of the result of his researches.

"Monsieur," said Laurent, "unless you go there in a balloon I don't see how you are going to get into the mansion."

"You are a dummy. Is it then necessary to go into the hôtel to have Paquita, when Paquita is likely to come out at any moment?"

"But, monsieur, the duenna."

"She may keep her room for some days—your duenna."

"And then we have Paquita," said Laurent, rubbing his hands.

"Idiot!" answered Henri. "I will condemn you to the Concha if you have the impertinence to speak in that manner of a woman before I have possessed her. Look after my clothes, I am going out."

For some little time Henri sat plunged in happy thoughts. Being the darling of women, he was always able to obtain all that he pleased to desire of them; and this was when he thought of a women without loving her: who then could resist this young man armed with beauty and strength of body and with intelligence and graciousness? But having such easy triumphs de Marsay had become weary of them; so, for the past two years, he had been sick of them. Now plunged into the depths of voluptuousness, he found that he had gathered more gravel than pearls. Therefore he had come, as sovereigns do, to implore some chance obstacle to his victory; some enterprise which would demand the employment of all his moral power and active physical energies.

Although Paquita Valdès displayed to him the marvelous assemblage of perfections which he had never before seen except in detail, the attraction seemed almost null. A constant satiety had weakened the sentiment of love in his heart. Like old and worn-out men, he had no more extravagant caprices, his taste was ruined, his fancies satisfied; he no longer had any sweet memories in his heart.

Among young men love is the most beautiful of sentiments: it flourishes in the life of the soul, it arouses by a solar power the most delightful inspirations and the greatest thoughts; the first-fruits of all things have the most delicious flavor. Among men love becomes a passion: strength leads to its abuse. With the old it turns to a vice—impotence being the end. Henri was at the same time an old man and a young one.

He had failed to arouse an emotion of real love, the same as Lovelace with Clarissa Harlowe. Without the reflec-

[1] *Moineau* (sparrow) and *Moinot* are pronounced alike.

and reseal it. The old tyrant, *crudel tiranno,* must without a doubt know the person who writes these letters from London, and he would not have the least misgivings."

Next day de Marsay again promenaded in the sun on the Terrasse des Feuillants, and there he saw Paquita Valdès; she was more already than his passion had embellished her. He gazed with seriousness in those eyes whose flashes seemed to have the nature of the rays of the sun, and whose ardor summed up a perfect body where all was voluptuousness. De Marsay was scorched as he gazed on the dress of that seductive maiden when he met her in their promenade, but his efforts at communication were all in vain.

At the time when he again repassed Paquita and her duenna, he placed himself so that he would be on the side of the girl with golden eyes when she turned around; Paquita, no less impatient, advanced toward him with eagerness, and he felt a pressure of the hand by hers which was at the same time so quickly done and with such passionate significance that he thought he had received an electric shock. For a moment all the emotions of youth surged in his heart. When the two lovers looked at each other, Paquita seemed abashed; she lowered her eyes before Henri's gaze, but his cool survey of her feet and figure had that of those whom women, before the Revolution, called "their conqueror."

"I am resolved to have that girl for my mistress," said Henri to himself.

As he followed her to the end of the terrace, by the side of the Place Louis XV., he perceived the old Marquis de San-Réal, who was walking, supported on the arm of his valet, with all the care of a gouty and dyspeptic man. Doña Concha, who mistrusted Henri, placed Paquita between herself and the old man.

"Oh! that's it," said de Marsay, casting a look of disdain on the duenna; "if she doesn't look out she'll get a small dose of opium or some other narcotic. We know our mythology and the story of Argus."

Before getting into her carriage the girl with golden eyes exchanged a glance with her lover, a look which was anything but doubtful and which ravished Henri; but the duenna caught it and spoke sharply to Paquita, who threw herself back in the coupé with an air of desperation. For some days Paquita did not again visit the Tuileries.

Laurent, who by order of his master had been on the lookout around the San-Réal mansion, was informed by the neighbors that neither the two women nor the old Marquis had gone out since the day when the duenna had surprised the glance of recognition between Henri and the young girl under her charge. The so weak tie which united the two lovers was thus already broken.

Some days after, without any person having the least idea of his doings, de Marsay had decided on his course; he had made a seal and provided some sealing-wax, an exact counterpart of the impression and wax which sealed the letters sent from London to Mlle. Valdès; also similar paper to that used by her correspondent; then he provided all the requisite articles and the stamps necessary to give the appearance of the English and French postmarks. He had written the following epistle, to which he

gave every appearance of a letter sent from London:

"Dearest Paquita—I cannot by words attempt to paint with what passion you have inspired me. If, to my great happiness, you partake the like sentiment, know that I have found this means of corresponding with you. My name is Adolphe de Gouges, and I reside on the Rue de l'Université, No. 54. If you are too closely watched to be able to write, or if you have neither paper nor pens, I shall know by your silence. Therefore if to-morrow, between eight o'clock in the morning and ten at night, you have not thrown a letter in reply over the wall of your garden into that of the Baron de Nucingen, where I shall remain the whole day, a man who is entirely devoted to my interests will secretly sling two phials over the wall, at the end of a cord, at ten o'clock the following morning. Manage to go out for your walk about that time. One of the phials will contain opium for sending your Argus off to sleep, six drops will be enough to give her; the other contains ink. The ink phial is of cut glass and the other is smooth. Both are thin and flat enough to be concealed in your corset. All that I have already done to enable me to correspond with you will prove to you whether I was wrong in saying that I love you. If you doubt this I vow to you that, to be given an interview of one hour with you, I would give my life for the privilege."

"They think this sort of thing is fine, these poor creatures," said de Marsay; "and they are right. What should we think of a woman who would not allow herself to be seduced by a love-letter accompanied by circumstances so convincing?"

Next day this letter was delivered by Moinot, the letter-carrier, about eight o'clock in the morning, to the janitor of the San-Réal mansion.

To be nearer the field of battle de Marsay had taken breakfast with Paul, who lived in the Rue de la Pépinière. At two o'clock, at the moment when the two friends were bursting with laughter over the discomfiture of a young man who had attempted to lead the train of fashion without having the fortune necessary to assist him, and who had just reached the end of his tether, Henri's coachman came in to seek his master at Paul's house, and to introduce to him a mysterious personage, who wished to speak to him and him alone.

This person was a mulatto, who would undoubtedly have inspired Talma for the play of Othello, if he had but met him. Never did an African show such grandeur of vengeance or such a quickness of perception, combined with an instant execution of his thoughts; he had the strength of the Moor and the indiscretion of a child. His dark eyes were fixed like those of a bird of prey and were, like those of a vulture, set in a bluish membrane devoid of eyelashes. His small, low forehead had something menacing about it. It was evident that this man was the slave of one single thought. His nervous arms seemed not to belong to him. He was accompanied by another man, one at whom all imaginations shiver and shake like Greenland, and like what is described in New England as an "unlucky

man,"[1] or something after this phrase.

This word will enable all the world to divine his appearance after the particular ideas prevailing in each country. But who can figure his pallid face, wrinkled, red at the extremities, and his long beard? Who can see his necktie like a yellow string, his greasy shirt-collar, his used-up hat, his greenish greatcoat, his piteous trousers, his vest awry, his imitation gold pin, his broken shoes, the strings of which had dabbled in the mud? Who can comprehend the immensity of his past and present poverty? Who? The Parisian alone. The man of ill-luck in Paris is the most thoroughly unlucky man in the whole world, for he still possesses the delight of knowing how unlucky he has been. The mulatto seemed to be an executioner of Louis XI., holding up a man whom he had hung.

"For which of our sins is it that we must meet these two scallawags?" said Henri.

"By the gods! that fellow there gives me the shivers," replied Paul.

"Who are you, you that has the manner of being the better Christian of the two?" said Henri, turning to the unlucky man.

The mulatto fixed his gaze on the two young men, like a man who heard nothing, and yet who tried nevertheless to guess something of what was said by gestures and the movements of the lips.

"I am a public writer and interpreter. I live at the Palais de Justice, and my name is Poincet."

"Good. And who is that?" said Henri, pointing to the mulatto.

"I don't know; he speaks nothing but a Spanish jargon; I brought him here that he might speak to you."

The mulatto drew from his pocket the letter that Henri had written Mlle. Paquita—he, Henri!—who at once threw it on the fire.

"Well, there goes the commencement of my scheme," said he to himself. "Paul, leave us for a few moments."

"I translated that letter for him," said the interpreter, when they were alone. "When I had done this, he went, I don't know where. Then he returned and asked me to bring him here, promising me two louis if I would do so."

"What does he say to me, is it Chinese?" asked Henri.

"I could not understand him if he spoke *Chinese,*" said the interpreter. "He says, monsieur," continued he after listening to the unknown, "that he would like to meet you to-morrow night at half-past ten, on the Boulevard Montmartre, near the café. You will there see a carriage into which you must get, saying to the one who opens the door the one word, *cortejo;* a Spanish word which is equivalent to saying 'lover,'" added Poincet, casting a look of congratulation on Henri.

"Well!"

The mulatto was about giving Poincet the two louis, but de Marsay would not allow him to reward the interpreter; while he himself was paying him, the mulatto spoke again.

"What does he say?"

"He cautions me," replied the unlucky man, "that if I commit the least indiscretion he will strangle me. He is a pretty gentleman, is very powerful,

[1] *C'était un homme malheureux.*

and has the air of being capable of doing as he says."

"I am sure of it," replied Henri, "by the way in which he spoke."

"He added," continued the interpreter, "that the person who conducts you and yourself must exercise the greatest prudence in all your actions, both for your own and her sake; for daggers are raised above your heads which can readily be plunged into your hearts without any human power being able to prevent?"

"He said that, eh? All the better; this makes it more amusing. You may come in again, Paul," he cried to his friend.

The mulatto, who had not once removed his eyes from Paquita Valdès's lover, gazed at him with a magnetic look, until he followed the interpreter from the room.

"Well, I am in for a most romantic adventure," said Henri, when Paul returned. "On the strength of having participated in a number of others, I finish by meeting in Paris with an intrigue accompanied by dangerous surroundings and perils. Ah, the deuce, how brave danger renders a woman! Restrain a woman, constrain her will, and is she not given the right and courage to in a moment leap over all barriers placed around her for years and to issue forth? Gentle creature, be it so, jump. To perish? poor girl. Of daggers? all the imagining of women. They experience all the reward which their little pleasantry is worth. Now be all my thoughts of thee, Paquita; to only think of thee, my girl! The devil take me! all I know is that she is a handsome girl; this masterpiece of nature is for me; the adventure is lost in its cream."

Notwithstanding these light words, the young man had repaired to Henri's home, who, to await the morrow without suffering, had recourse to extravagant pleasures; he played, dined, and supped with his friend; he drank like a coachman, ate like a German, and won ten or twelve thousand francs at the gaming-table. He went to the Rocher de Cancale at two o'clock in the morning, slept like a child, rising the next day as fresh as a rose, dressed himself to go to the Tuileries, and proposed a horseback ride after having seen Paquita; he gained thereby an appetite for dinner, as well as passing the time.

At the hour mentioned, Henri was on the boulevard; he saw the carriage, gave the password to a man who appeared to be the mulatto. Hearing the word, the man opened the door and quickly climbed on the box-seat. Henri was rapidly carried into Paris, but his thoughts left him but little faculty of noticing the streets through which he passed; he did not even know where he was when the carriage stopped.

The mulatto took him into a house in which the stairs were seen to be near the carriage-gate. The stairway was dark; so also was the place where Henri was obliged to wait during the time that the mulatto took in opening the door of a humid apartment, nauseous and without any light, and whose rooms were barely distinguishable by the candle which his guide found in the vestible; it appeared empty to him, and the movables had a bad odor, as those have whose occupants are traveling. He recognized a similar sensation to the one

he experienced when reading one of Ann Radcliffe's romances, where the hero traverses the cold, dark halls of some fearful and deserted habitation.

At length the mulatto opened the door of a salon. In it there was some old furniture and older fashioned curtains, though the room was ornamented to resemble the salon of a house of ill-fame. There were the same pretensions to elegance and the same collection of things in bad taste, the same dust and dirt. On a couch covered with red Utrecht velvet, in the corner of the fireplace which smoked and the fire of which was buried in ashes, sat an old, badly clothed woman, her head-dress being one of those turbans which are known to have been invented by Englishwomen when they have arrived at a certain age, and which would become an infinite success in China, where the idea of beauty is a monstrosity. The salon, the old woman, the cold hearth, all these had chilled his love, if Paquita had not been here, for any cause, in a voluptuous dressing-gown, loosing and throwing her glances of gold and flame, liberating and showing her rounded foot, showing freedom in her luminous movements.

This first interview was like that of all first meetings given to all passionate folk, who quickly overleap every distance to attain what they ardently desire, without the least restraint. It was impossible that he should not meet with the self-same discordant surroundings in this position, troublesome at the moment when her soul becomes the same as yours. So desire gives boldness to the man and he is disposed to care for nothing; under pain of not being a woman, his mistress will go to some extremes to see whether he really loves her; she is afraid of finding the time arrive too quickly when she will be face to face with the necessity of giving that, which for the majority of women is equivalent to a fall down a precipice, and the depths of which are to her unknown. The involuntary frigidity of that woman contrasts with her passion acknowledged and of course reacted upon by the lover with whom she is smitten. These ideas, which often float like vapors about the soul, are termed therefore naught but a passing malady.

In that sweet journey that two beings take in traveling through the beautiful land of love, that time is like a heath to cross, a heath without furze, at one time humid, at another warm, filled with ardent sands, interspersed with marshes, and which have pleasant coppices clad in roses under which love and its accompanying delights can be enjoyed on the rich carpet of fine verdure.

Very often the spiritual man finds himself saluted with a coarse jest by some brute who employs this as an answer to everything; his mind is benumbed under the glacial pressure of his desire. To him it is impossible that there can be two equally beautiful spirits —the spiritual and the animal passion; as we are now speaking of the most simple commonplace topics, such as a chance word, the thrill of a glance, the flash of a touch, a happy transition of soul which draws out the bloom of sentiment unconfined, in which they may roll without a downfall. This state of mind is always right in the violence of its feelings. Two beings who love but feebly can experience nothing like unto this. The effect of such a crisis can only

be compared to that heat which is produced by a clear sky. Nature seems at first sight to be covered with a veil of gauze, the blue of the firmament appears black, an excess of light resembles shadow.

To Henri and the fair Spaniard it came with equal violence; and that static law by virtue of which in two equal forces each annuls the other when they meet is precisely the same in the realm of morals. Then the embarrassment of this moment was strangely augmented by the presence of the old mummy. Everything either alarms or delights love, in everything there is a sense which presages happiness or ill-fortune. This decrepit woman was there like a poor conclusion, and figured as the horrid train of snakes by which Greek genius symbolized the followers of its chimeras and sirens; so seductive, so deceiving by their bodies, as all passions are at their inception. Although Henri was not strong-minded, a word of constant raillery, but a man of extraordinary power, a man grand beyond belief, this combination of surroundings had struck him down. The strongest men are naturally the most impressionable ones, consequently the most superstitious, so they always speak of superstition as being their judgment at first sight; whereby they do, without a doubt, perceive the result of causes hidden from other eyes, but plainly discernible to theirs.

The Spanish woman profited by this moment of stupor to fall into an infinite ecstasy of adoration which seizes the heart of a woman when she really loves and finds herself in the presence of an idol for whom she had vainly hoped. Her eyes were full of joy and happiness, which escaped in brilliant flashes. She was under the charm, fearlessly intoxicated with a felicity of which she had long dreamed. She was now able to see Henri's marvelous beauty, so that all the phantasmagoria of rags, old age, worn-out red hangings, of old green mats before the arm-chairs, the red square of carpet so badly worn, and all this infirm luxury and suffering speedily disappeared. The salon was illuminated; he no longer saw as through a floating mist that terrible harpy, fixed and mute on her red couch, whose yellow eyes betrayed the servile sentiments which had unhappily inspired him, nor was she longer the cause of a vice under which he had been ensnared or she had fallen like a tyrant who has suddenly come under the flagellations of his despotism. Her eyes shone cold like those of a tiger in a cage which knows its powerlessness and finds itself compelled to swallow its envy of destruction.

"Who is that woman?" asked Henri of Paquita.

Paquita made no reply to this question. She made a sign that she did not understand French, and asked Henri if he spoke English. De Marsay then repeated the question in English.

"That is the only woman whom I dare trust, although she has already sold me," said Paquita, tranquilly. "My dear Adolphe, this is my mother, a slave who was bought in Georgia[1] for her rare beauty, but who now has but little to do with her owner. She speaks only her mother-tongue."

The attitude of the old woman and the envy she showed of the movements

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[1]Asia Minor.

of her daughter and Henri, as she guessed what passed between them, was a sudden revelation to the young man, it made it easy of explanation.

"Paquita," said he, "are you never at liberty?"

"Never," she replied, with a wearied air. "Every day is like every other to us."

She dropped her eyes, looked at his hand, then took his right hand and placed it on the fingers of her left hand, pointing to her prettier ones, which were the most beautiful that Henri had ever seen.

"One, two three——"

She counted up to a dozen.

"Yes," said she, "we have twelve days."

"And after those?"

"After," said she, stopping, absorbed, like a feeble woman before the executioner's ax, killed in advance by a dread which had despoiled her of that magnificent energy with which, as it seemed to him, nature had furnished her. But to him it had not departed; it seemed rather to augment her voluptuousness and transmute the grossest pleasures into endless poems.

"After!" she repeated.

Her eyes became fixed; she seemed to be contemplating some distant, menacing object.

"I don't know," said she.

"This girl is a fool," said Henri to himself, falling into strange reflections.

Paquita seemed to be occupied with something that had nothing to do with him, like a fashionable woman who is equally driven by her remorse and her passion. It might be that she had another love in her heart which she had for the nonce forgotten, but which had again taken its turn. In a moment Henri was assailed by a thousand contradictory thoughts. To him this girl had become a mystery; but as he contemplated her with the knowing attention of an old rounder, his passionate desires were aflame once more, like that King of the East who demanded that a new pleasure be invented for him, with that dreadful thirst with which all great souls are seized.

Henri found in Paquita the richest organization that ever Nature had delighted in making for love. The play to be expected from that machine, the soul placed to one side, had frightened every other man but de Marsay; but he was fascinated by this rich harvest of promised delights; by that constant variety of happiness, the dream of every man, and which every woman loves to place before her as her ambition. He was excited by the infinite love shown so palpably, and was transported to the most excessive of creature delights. He most distinctly saw all this in the woman before him, more so than when he had first seen her, for she complacently allowed herself to be gazed at, happy in being admired. De Marsay's admiration of her had become a secret torment, and she revealed it in its entirety, throwing him a glance which was altogether Spanish, and as though she had always been used to receiving the like homage.

"If you do not become mine, and mine alone, I shall kill you," he exclaimed.

As she heard this Paquita veiled her face in her hands and naïvely cried:

"Holy Virgin! What have I brought upon myself?"

She arose, ran and threw herself on the red lounge, plunging her head in the

rags covering her mother's bosom, and burst into tears. The old woman received her daughter without stirring out of her immobility, and not making a sign. The mother possessed to a high degree that gravity of savage folk, that impassiveness of a statue which frustrates all curiosity. Did she, or did she not, love her daughter? could not be answered. Under a mask which concealed every human feeling, good and bad alike, naught could be made of this creature. Her glance fell lightly on her daughter's beautiful hair, which was partly covered under a mantilla, and then to Henri's face, which she observed with an inexplicable curiosity. She seemed to be asking herself by what witchcraft had he come to be there; by what caprice of nature had he been made so seductive.

"These women are mocking me!" said Henri.

At this moment Paquita raised her head, threw on him one of those glances which burn into the soul. She appeared so lovely that he swore to himself that he would possess this treasure of loveliness.

"Dear Paquita, come to me."

"Do you want to kill me?" said she, timorous, palpitating, uneasy, but drawn toward him by an inexplicable power.

"Kill you, I!" said he, smiling.

Paquita uttered a startled cry, said one word to her mother, who authoritatively took Henri's hand, then that of her daughter, looking at both of them for a long time, then tossed her head in a manner that was horribly significant.

"Come to me this evening, this moment; be mine, do not leave me; I am willing. Paquita! don't you love me? Come then!"

In a moment he said a thousand insensate words, with the rapidity of a torrent dashing down and between the rocks, repeating the same again and again in a thousand different forms.

"It is the same voice," said Paquita, with sadness; but de Marsay heard her not; "the same ardor," added she. "Well, yes," she said, with an abandon of passion which it is impossible to express. "Yes, but not to-night. This evening. Adolphe, I gave but little opium to La Concha; should she revive before my return, I am lost. At this very moment the whole house believes that I am asleep in my own chamber. In two days go to the same place, speak the same word to the same man. That man is my foster father; Cristemio worships me and would die for me in awful torment without disclosing one word against me. Farewell!" said she, seizing Henri by the neck and entwining herself around him like a serpent.

She squeezed him from all sides at once, she placed his head on her bosom and held up her lips to his, and took a kiss that gave both of them such a dizziness that de Marsay thought that the earth had opened, and that made Paquita cry out:

"Go on!" in a voice which told plainly enough how little she was her own mistress. But still she guarded herself, although she cried out all the more: "Come on," as she led him to the stairs.

There the mulatto, whose white eyes brightened at the sight of Paquita, took the light from the hand of his idol and showed Henri to the street. He left the light under the archway of the door,

opened the gate, joined Henri in the carriage, and drove him to the Boulevard des Italiens with marvelous rapidity. The horses seemed imbued with the devil.

The scene was like a dream to de Marsay, but yet one of those visions that, after vanishing away, leave in the soul a feeling of supernatural voluptuousness, after which a man runs during the rest of his life. One single kiss had sufficed. No meeting had ever been passed in a more decent manner, or more chaste or colder perhaps, in that place, horrible by what regularly took place therein, before a more hideous divinity; for that mother stayed in Henri's mind like some hellish thing, squat, cadaverous, vicious, of such savage ferocity, that all the fantasies of painters and poets have failed as yet to divine it. As a matter of fact, never had an assignation excited his senses equal to this one, neither had there ever been revealed to him an equal ardor of voluptuousness, nor had love ever gushed out from the center of his being and diffused itself like an atmosphere around a man, like unto this. There was something somber, mysterious, sweet, and tender; there was something at once of constraint and expansion, a blending of the horrible and the celestial, of paradise and hell, which had the effect of intoxication upon de Marsay. It overpowered him, yet he was great enough, nevertheless, to have the power of resisting this drunkenness of delights.

For the full understanding of his conduct at the dénouement of this story, it becomes necessary to explain how his mind was so broad at an age when young men's ordinarily shrink up when they mix with women or are too much taken with them. He was great by a combination of secret circumstances which had invested him with an enormous power unknown to others. This young man held in his hand a scepter more puissant than that wielded by any modern king, all of whom are curbed more by the laws than their wills.

De Marsay exerted the autocratic power of an Oriental despot.

But this power, so stupidly exercised in Asia by brutish men, was coupled with an European intelligence, by the French spirit, the most vital, the finest steel of all intelligent instruments. Henri could do what he would to the advantage of his pleasures and vanities. This invisible action on society was the investiture of a real but secret majesty, which had no force nor ability to turn against himself. It was his opinion that Louis XIV. did not possess a power equal to his, but that the most arrogant of Caliphs, of Pharaohs, of Xerxes, who believed their line divine, was the same as his, when they imitated God by veiling themselves before their subjects, under the pretense that their glances were death. So without having any remorse at being at once the judge and the client, de Marsay coolly condemned the man or woman to death who had seriously offended him; although very often rashly pronounced, the verdict was irrevocable.

A mistake was a misfortune, and seemed to them something like the thunderbolt which strikes some happy Parisian in a coach, instead of crushing the old coachman who was driving him to an assignation. So the titter and profound pleasantry which distinguished

the conversation of this young man was generally the cause of dread to others; people did not experience any envy when they struck against him. Women have a prodigious liking for those men whom they call pashas among themselves; who seem to be companions of lions and executioners, and who walk appareled in terror. It results among these men in a security of action, a certainty of power, a pride of looks, a leonine spirit, which to women realizes the type of strength of which they all dream. Such was de Marsay.

Just now he was happy in the thought of his future. He became young and willowy; he had no vision of love as he went to bed. He there dreamed of the girl with golden eyes, who seemed to return to the passionate scene in which the young people had taken part. It was a dream of monstrosities, of unseizable phantasies, full of light which revealed invisible worlds, but always in an incomplete state, for a veil interposed which changed the optical conditions.

The next day, and the one following, Henri disappeared without letting anyone know whither he had gone. His power did not belong to him under certain conditions, and, luckily for him, during these two days he was a simple soldier at the service of the demon whom he had taken into his talismanic existence. But, at the hour and on the evening mentioned, he awaited the carriage on the boulevard, which was not long in coming. The mulatto approached Henri to say to him, in a sentence of French he had learned by heart:

"If you would go with me, I am told by her to ask whether you will consent that I bandage your eyes?"

Cristemio held out a silk handkerchief.

"No!" said Henri, whose mind suddenly and powerfully revolted.

He made as though he would enter, but the mulatto gave a signal and the carriage started off.

"Yes!" cried de Marsay, furious at the loss of the happiness he had promised himself. Otherwise, he saw the impossibility of capitulating to a slave whose obedience was as blind as that of an executioner. Then was his anger with such an instrument becoming him?

The mulatto whistled, the carriage returned. Henri hastily sprang in. Already some curious simpletons had gathered on the boulevard. Henri was strong, he would have a game with the mulatto.

Presently the carriage started off at a round trot, then he seized him by the hands, intending by holding them to render him powerless; by thus checking his keeper, he could exercise his faculties in order to learn whither he went. Useless attempt. The eyes of the mulatto sparkled in the darkness. He repressed the cries of rage which expired in his throat, released himself by throwing off de Marsay with a hand of iron; he confined him, so to speak, at the bottom of the carriage; then with his free hand he drew a triangular poniard, and whistled. The driver, hearing the whistle, at once stopped.

Henri was unarmed, he was compelled to submit; he held his head for the handkerchief. This gesture of submission appeased Cristemio, who placed the bandage over his eyes with a respect and care which bore witness to a kind of veneration for the person of the man

loved by his idol. But, before taking this precaution, he had defiantly placed the poniard in the sheath at his side and buttoned himself up to the chin.

"He would have killed me, this Chinaman," said de Marsay.

The carriage again rolled rapidly along. There remained one resource to a young man who knew Paris well as Henri did. To know whither he went it was sufficient for him to gather, by counting the number of gutters he crossed, what were passed on the boulevards and along which the carriage continued going to the right. He could thus recognize by what lateral street the carriage diverged, whether toward the Seine or toward the heights of Montmartre, and to guess the name of the street where his guide should finally stop.

But the violent emotion caused by his struggle, his rage at having his dignity compromised, his ideas of revenge to which he gave himself up, the suppositions suggested to him by the minute care taken in conducting him to this mysterious girl, all these obstacles had blunted the necessary concentration of his attention, intelligence, and the perfect perspicacity of his memory.

The journey lasted for half an hour. When the carriage stopped, it was no longer on the paved streets. The mulatto and driver took Henri by "leg and wing," lifted him, and carried him in a sort of litter fashion across a garden in which he smelt flowers and the peculiar scent of trees and grass. The silence that reigned was so profound that he was able to distinguish the noise made by some drops of water falling from the humid leaves.

The two men mounted some steps with him, here they set him down, guiding him by the hand, finally leaving him in a room the atmosphere of which was perfumed and where, under his feet, he felt a thick carpet. The hand of a woman pushed him on to a divan and removed the bandage from his eyes. Henri saw Paquita before him, but it was Paquita in her glory of female voluptuousness.

That part of the boudoir in which Henri found himself was formed in a soft, gracious circular form, the part opposite being of a perfectly square shape, in the middle of which glittered a chimney mantel of white marble and gold. It was entered by a lateral door hidden by a curtain of rich tapestry, and was opposite a window. The veritable ornamented Turkish divan was of a horseshoe shape; that is to say, it was a low mattress, but was as large as a bed, on a divan with fifty turned feet, upholstered in white cashmere, relieved by knots of deep scarlet and black silk of lozenge shape. The back of this immense bed was elevated many inches at the upper part by the numerous cushions which enriched it, and could be arranged agreeably to the taste. This boudoir was hung with a soft red stuff, on which fluted India lawn was deftly draped into Corinthian columns, by alternate pipings of crosses and circles, being finished at top and bottom by a band of red poppy colored stuff on which a number of black arabesques were designed.

Under the lawn the scarlet became rose color, an amorous color, which matched the curtains over the window, which were of India lawn looped over

rose taffeta and ornamented with scarlet and black fringes. Six silver-gilt brackets supported each two wax-candles, being attached to the tapestry at equal distances apart, for lighting the divan. The ceiling, from the center of which hung a luster of dull silver gilt, sparkled with whiteness, and the cornice was golden. The carpet resembled an Oriental shawl covered with designs full of the poetry of Persia, and upon which the hands of its slaves had worked.

The furniture was draped in white cashmere prettily set off with scarlet and black. The clock and candelabra were of white marble and gold. The only table there had a cashmere cover. Some elegant jardinières contained every species of roses, or red and white flowers. Indeed, the least detail seemed to have been carefully chosen with an eye to love. Never had riches coquettishly shown such a hidden elegance, expressing gracefulness and inspiring voluptuousness. Here everything would have warmed up the coldest heart. The chasteness of the ceiling, the color of which changed as the look followed it, being first all white and then all rose color, and matched with the effect of the lights which were mellowed under the diaphanous shades of lawn, producing a misty appearance in the room.

As I have never known a being who is not fond of white, so love is pleased with red, and gold flatters the passions, it has the power of realizing their fancies. So all that this man had that was vague and mysterious in himself, all his affinities that were inexplicable, he here found caressing him by their involuntary sympathies. He had here in this perfect harmony a concert of colors to which his soul responded in his voluptuous ideas, indecisive and floating.

It was in the midst of this vaporous air charged with exquisite perfumes that Paquita, dressed in a white dressing-gown, her feet bare, orange flowers in her black tresses, appeared to Henri, kneeling before him, like the worshiper when the god of the temple has deigned to visit it. Therefore de Marsay, habituated as he was to seeing Parisian luxury, was surprised at the aspect of this shell, which might have done for Venus's grotto.

Whether it was in consequence of the contrast between the darkness from which he had emerged into the light which bathed his soul, whether it was a rapid comparison made between this scene and that of his former interview, it proved one of those delicate sensations which give birth to true poetry. Perceiving, in the center of this little habitation, hatched by the wand of a fairy, the masterpiece of creation, this girl, whose warm-colored tint and soft skin, lightly golden by the reflection of the crimson and by the effusion of I know not what effluxion of love, which scintillated as if she reflected the rays of light and of the colors, his rage, his desire for vengeance, his wounded pride, all fell. Like an eagle which has found its prey, he pressed a live body; he seated her on his knees, and felt with an unspeakable intoxication the voluptuous pressure of this girl, whose largely developed beauties sweetly enfolded her.

"Come, Paquita!" said he, in a low voice.

"Speak up, speak without fear," said she to him. "This retreat has been built for love. No sound can escape, all has

been carefully done here to prevent the loss of any accents of the best-beloved voice. Whatever outcry may be made in this citadel they can never hear it outside this *enceinte*. Here one could slay someone, their petitions and vain entreaties would be the same as if made in the middle of a desert."

"Who, then, has so well understood jealousy and its needs?" he asked.

"Never question me in reference to this," she replied, untying with an unbelievably gentle touch, the cravat of the young man, that she might the better see his neck.

"Yes, there is the neck that I shall love forever," said she. "Would you do me a pleasure?"

This question, the accent of which made it almost lascivious, brought de Marsay out of a reverie into which he had been plunged, the despotic response by which Paquita had interdicted all research on the unknown person who, like a shadow, had arranged all these advantages for them.

"And if I would know who reigned here?"

Paquita looked at him and shivered.

"This has not been done for me," said he, rising and disengaging himself of the girl, whose head fell back. "Where I am concerned I would be alone."

"He will strike me, strike me!" cried the poor slave, a prey to terror.

"For what do you take me? Can you reply?"

Paquita slowly rose, with tears in her eyes, went to one of two ebony caskets, and from it took a dagger and offered it to Henri, with a gesture of submission which would have moved a tiger.

"Give me a fête such as is given by men when they love," said she, "and, then, while I sleep, kill me, for I cannot answer you. Listen! I am fastened like a poor animal to its picket; I am astonished at having been able to throw a bridge over the gulf which had separated us. Intoxicate me, then kill me.

"Ah! no, no," said she, wringing her hands, "do not kill me, I love life. Life is very beautiful to me. If I am a slave, I am also a queen. I am abashed by your words. You say that I must not love you; prove me; profit by my temporary empire to say: 'Take me as a little taste, the passing perfume of a flower in the garden of a king.' Then, after having unfolded the subtle eloquence of a woman and the wings of pleasure, after having slaked my thirst, I can then throw myself into a pit where no person can find me, and which has been dug to satisfy a vengeance without any dread of that of justice; a pit of quicklime will consume one without leaving a trace of ever having been. You will always rest in my heart, you will always be mine."

Henri gazed at this girl without a tremor, and her look was without fear and full of joy.

"No, I am not chained. You have not fallen here into a trap, but into the heart of a woman who adores you, and it is myself who throws her into that well."

"All this seems awfully funny to me," said de Marsay, examining himself. "But you appear to be a good girl, though of a fantastical nature; you are, on the faith of an honest man, a living charade the word of which seems particularly difficult to discover."

Paquita understood nothing of what

was said by the young man; she looked at him sweetly, and with wide staring eyes not altogether unlike an animal; all she was filled with was voluptuousness.

"Now, my love," said she, returning to her first idea, "will you do me a pleasure?"

"I will do all that you wish me, and also what you may not wish me to do," replied the smiling de Marsay, who found himself at his ease, now that he had taken the resolution to leave all to the course of his good luck without looking behind him or into the future. Then, perhaps, counting on his power and on his knowledge of men and his good luck for dominating for some hours, more or less, this girl, and learning all her secrets.

"Well, then," said she to him, "leave it to me to arrange how—to my taste."

"Yes, dish yourself up to me in your own style," said Henri.

Paquita then joyously took from a cabinet a robe of scarlet velvet in which she clothed de Marsay, using for herself as head-dress a lace cap and a rich shawl *entortilla.* Giving herself up to these frivolities, done with the innocence of a child, she burst into a convulsive laugh, which made her resemble a bird flapping its wings; but she could not see what was beyond.

It were impossible to paint the unheard-of delights which inspired these two beautiful creatures placed by heaven at that moment in a state of joyousness; it is perhaps necessary to translate metaphysically the almost fantastic and altogether extraordinary impressions of the young man.

The people who occupy the social scale in which de Marsay moved, and who live as he lived, well understand that the best thing they know is the innocence of a young girl. But, a strange thing, if the girl with the golden eyes was a virgin, she most certainly was not pure. The fantastical combination of the mysterious and real, of light and shadow, of the horrid and the beautiful, of pleasure and danger, of paradise and hell, with which he had already met in the course of this adventure, was continually shown in her play with de Marsay. All this voluptuousness, the most refined that he had ever known, showed to Henri all that poetry of the senses that is called love; but this was surpassed by the treasures unfolded by that girl, whose yellow eyes belied no promise that they had made. It was an Oriental poem, the radiant sun that shines out in the bounding strophes of Saadi and Hafiz; only that neither Saadi's rhythm nor that of Pindar could in any sense depict the ecstatic plenitude of confusion nor the stupor which had seized this *delicious* girl when he discontinued the error of using his hand of iron and allowed her to breathe.

"Death!" said she. "I am dead. Adolphe, carry me away to the end of the earth, to an island where no one can find me. Let us fly and leave no trace behind us. We shall be followed even to hell itself. My God, it is day—save yourself. I shall always revere you. Yes, to-morrow I will receive you; the cost of this so great happiness is the death of all those who look after my safety. We meet to-morrow."

She lay in his arms as in a stirrup, and he there saw all the torture of death. Then she pushed a button, which was

responded to by the sound of a bell, begging de Marsay to allow her to bandage his eyes.

"And if I would rather not; if I determine to stay here?"

"You would be the cause of my speedy death," said she, "for even now I am sure of dying for you."

Henri took the chances. He recognized that the man who is gorged with pleasure is on the declivity toward oblivion; he could not be ungrateful; but a desire for liberty, a fancy to take a walk, a tinge of scorn or possibility of disgust for his idol, or, indeed, some inexplicable sentiments which might render him ignoble and ashamed. The certainty of that confused but genuine affection among souls which are not illumined by that celestial light, nor perfumed by that holy balm which is associated with a pertinacity of sentiment, without a doubt dictated to Rousseau the adventures of Lord Edward, which conclude the letter of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Rousseau was evidently inspired by Richardson's work; he is far from it in a thousand details which leave his monument more magnificent than the original; he is recommended to posterity by a thousand ideas which are most difficult to either explain or analyze, when, in youth, we read this work with the design of finding therein a heated description of the most physical of our feelings, while the serious and philosophical writings are not always used as the consequence or the necessity of a great thought; the adventures of Lord Edward are one of the ideas the most delicately European in that work.

Henri, a creature of the Empire, confused this sentiment, inasmuch as he had not known real love. In some way he failed in the persuasive art of comparisons, and his irresistible attractions of the memory were what brought women to his side. Above all, true love lives by the memory. The woman whose soul is not engraved upon, either by an excess of pleasure or a strength of feeling, can she ever be said to be in love? Unknown to Henri, Paquita had thus established him in two manners. But at this moment, entirely worn out with happiness, that delightful melancholy of the body, he could hardly analyze his heart as he tasted on her lips the flavor of the most delicious voluptuousness that he had ever plucked.

That morning, at a very early hour, he had found himself on the Boulevard Montmartre, looking stupidly at his runaway equipage; he drew two cigars out of his pocket and lit one at the lamp of the good woman who sold the brandy and coffee to workmen, *gamins*, hucksters, and all that Parisian population who commence life before the opening of the day; then he had gone, smoking his cigar, his hands in his trousers pockets, with an indifference that was really disgraceful.

"What a good thing is a good cigar. It is one of those things that never forsake a man," said he.

This girl with the golden eyes, who at this time had sent crazy all the fashionable young women of Paris, he now dreamed of punishing. This idea of death was brought forth to cross his pleasure, and whose fear had again shadowed the face of this beautiful being, who took after the houris of Asia, on her mother's side, belonging to Europe by her education, to the tropics by

her birth, seemed to him to be one of those seducing deceivers who do thus to make themselves more interesting.

"She is from Havana, the most Spanish of any country in the new world; she likes best of anything to play at terror, that she may throw me into much suffering, showing me the difficulty, the coquetry, or the duty, the same as Parisian women do. By her eyes of gold, I have a great desire for sleep."

He saw a hack standing at the corner of Frascati's, awaiting some gambler; he awoke the driver, telling him to drive him home; he went to bed and slept the sleep of the good-for-nothing, which, by an anachronism not a single song-writer has as yet struck, is proven to be more sound than that of innocence. Perhaps this is an effect of that proverbial axiom: "Extremes meet."

About midday de Marsay woke, stretched his arms, and felt as hungry as a famished dog, the same feeling that all old soldiers can well remember on the day following a victory. As he saw Paul de Manerville before him he was well pleased, for nothing can be more agreeable than to eat in company.

"Well," said his friend, "we can imagine all that was comprised during ten hours with the girl with golden eyes."

"The girl with golden eyes! why, I will not think of her again. By my faith, I have other fish to fry."

"Ah! you are discreet."

"Why not?" said de Marsay, smiling. "My dear fellow, discretion is easier than calculation. Listen—— but, no, I won't tell you a thing. You would not be able to understand anything; I am not disposed to cast my pearls before swine. Life is a river which facilitates commerce. For all that, my doings are the most sacred things on earth; by my cigars! I am not a professor of social economy set at the door of ninnies. Confound it. It is easier to cut an omelette than to fatigue my brain."

"Is this how you talk to your friends?"

"My dear fellow," said Henri, who rarely refused an opening for his sarcasm like that of this time, "to you above another I give the reward of discretion; that is because I like you so much. Yes, I love you. On my word of honor, you would not fail in finding me a bill for a thousand francs, by which you might hinder me heating my brains; you would find it for me, for we have nothing left to hypothecate, eh, Paul? If you should fight to-morrow, I would measure the distance and charge the pistols, in order that your arm would kill in a proper manner. Indeed, if any other person were to speak ill of you to me in your absence, he would have to take the measure of the rude gentleman whom you have found in my skin; there, that is what I call proving my friendship.

"Well, when you would have the reward of discretion, my boy, bear in mind that there are two kinds of discretion—the active and the negative. Negative discretion is that of fools and is silence—the negation, the frown, the discretion of closed doors, a true pusillanimity. Active discretion proceeds from the affirmative. If this evening, in our circle, I said: 'On the faith of an honest man, the girl with golden eyes is not worth what she has cost me,' all of them, when I had gone out, would exclaim: 'Did you hear that dude of a de Marsay, he tried to make us believe that he was already through with the girl with the

golden eyes? He wishes to be left unembarrassed with rivals; he is not very smart, though.'

"Now that scheme is both vulgar and dangerous. Some would have the silliness to let this escape: it is made known to every simpleton, who all believe it. The best of all discretions is that used by clever women when they have had a change from their husbands. It consists in compromising a woman on whom we have no hold, or that we do not love, or that we have not had, and thus preserving the honor of that one that we both love and respect. This is what I call the 'screen-woman.' Ah! here is Laurent. What are you bringing in?"

"Ostend oysters, M. le Comte."

"Some day you will know, Paul, how amusing it is to the world to steal the secret of our affections. I find an immense satisfaction in avoiding the stupid jurisdiction of the mob, which never knows what it wants, nor what it wishes, which takes the means for the result, which by turns worships and hates, or elevates and destroys. That happiness which is aroused by the emotions they can never receive, they cannot subdue it nor make it obedient to them. If they are perhaps proud of something, is it not by what they can acquire for themselves, which we sum up as the prime cause, the effect, the principal and the result? Well, no man can tell whom I love, unless I so will it. Perhaps some time I may tell you whom I love, that will be when I want you to know, so you may learn how the drama was worked out; but allow you to see into my game? —weakness, fraud. I know nothing more reprehensible than the forced play of cunning. In my smile I imitate the trade of an ambassador; is not that of the diplomatist the most difficult in life? Without a doubt. Are you ambitious? Would you become something?"

"Henri, you do but mock me; I am altogether too mediocre for that."

"Well, Paul, if you go on mocking at yourself, you will soon be mocking at all the world."

After breakfast, and as he smoked his cigar, de Marsay began to see the events of the past night in a strange light. How many great intelligences with his perspicacity and spontaneity but would try to delve to the bottom of things? Among all gentle natures there is a faculty of living beside that of the present, which expresses, as one may say, the juice which it devours; his second sight lacked one kind of slumber by which to identify causes. Cardinal de Richelieu was possessed of clairvoyance, so necessary for the conception of great undertakings. De Marsay found all the conditions, but he was unable to present arms to his profits and pleasures, and did not become one of the most profound politicians until the time arrived when he was actually saturated with pleasure, which always comes at last to all young men, and from whence, if at all, they begin to look for gold and power. This is the man of bronze: he uses women for what woman has no power to use herself.

At this moment then de Marsay perceived that he had been played with by the girl with golden eyes, seeing in all that had happened that night whose pleasures were not of that gradually gushing-out kind, which end by pouring down in torrents. Then he could read on this page, so brilliant in effect, and guess the concealed sense. The purely

physical innocence of Paquita, the astonishment of her delight, a few words, now obscure, now clear, escaped in the midst of her ravishment, all this proved to him that he was posing for some other person. How could any social corruptions be unknown to him, who professed to treat every caprice with perfect indifference, and believed himself justified by having already been given satisfaction; he was not afraid of vice, he knew how to understand a friend, but he was hurt if taken advantage of. So these presumptions were just, he has been outraged to the quick. This sole suspicion took fire; he would break the roaring tiger and scoff at the gazelle; the cry of a tiger was joined to the strength of a beast and the intelligence of a demon.

"Well, of what are you thinking?" said Paul.

"Nothing."

"I can't take that in; if I ask if you have anything against me, you answer, 'Nothing'; seemingly, he is about fighting to-morrow."

"I shall not fight again," said de Marsay.

"This seems more and more tragic. Are you going to assassinate someone?"

"You mix the words. I execute."

"My dear friend," said Paul, "your jests are very well at night, but this is morning."

"What will you! voluptuousness is the same as ferocity. Why? I do not know, and I am not sufficiently inquisitive to search out the cause. These cigars are excellent. Give your friend some tea. Do you know, Paul, that I am leading the life of a brute? He would in good time choose a destiny for himself, employ his strength at something which would be full of value to his existence. Life is a strange comedy. I am afraid, I laugh at the absurdity of our social conditions. The Government slices off the heads of the poor devils who kill a man, and issues diplomas to creatures who for expediency, in medical parlance, kill a dozen young men every winter. Morals are without force against a dozen vices which destroy society, and which nothing punishes.

"*Encore* the cup. On my word of honor! man is a clown who dances on the edge of a precipice. Now we speak of the immorality of *Dangerous Liaisons*, and of I know not what other book which has the name of a chamber-maid; but there is in existence a horrible book, smutty, frightful, corrupt, always open, which one can never close; the great book of the world, without counting that other book, a thousand times more dangerous, which contains all that has been overheard, between men, or under women's fans, each evening at a ball."

"Henri, it is most certain that you have gone through some extraordinary event, and already I can see it in spite of your 'active discretion.'"

"Yes! for a fact, he was almost devoured at this time last evening. It's all in the play. Perhaps I shall have the happiness of the lost."

De Marsay rose, took a roll of bank-bills, placed them in his box of cigars, dressed, and took advantage of Paul's carriage to go to the Salon des Étrangers, where, previous to dinner, he passed the time in play and changing alternately from winner to loser, the last resort of strong organizations, when they are restrained to exercise in a void. At night he went to the rendezvous and allowed

himself to be complacently bandaged about the eyes. Then with the firm will, which only really strong men have the power of concentrating, he turned his attention and applied his whole intelligence to guess by what streets he had passed in the carriage. He felt a kind of certainty of having been driven to the Rue Saint-Lazare, stopping at the wicket-gate of the garden attached to the San-Réal mansion.

When, like the first time, he passed this gate, through which he had, without doubt, been carried in litter fashion by the mulatto and coachman, he took notice of the crunching of the gravel under their feet, which showed the reason why they took such minute precautions. He would have been able, had he been at liberty, or had been allowed to walk, to pluck a twig from a bush, to observe the nature of the soil which clung to his boots; while being transported, as it were, through the air, his good fortune could only be ascribed to the raving of a dream. But, to the despair of man, he can see nothing but imperfections, whether it be good or whether it be had. All his works, be they intellectual or physical, are signed with the sign of destruction.

A slight rain was falling, the earth was moist. During the night certain vegetable odors are much stronger than in the day; Henri had smelt the perfume of mignonette along the path by which he had been carried. This indication should render easy the researches he promised himself to make in reconnoitering the hôtel in which he believed Paquita's boudoir was to be found.

All the same he studied the route by which he had been carried to the house, and quite believed that he could afterward recall it

He saw himself as on the previous day, when, on the ottoman before Paquita, she had unbandaged his eyes; but he saw her pale and changed. She was weeping; kneeling like an angel in prayer, but an angel that was sad and in deep melancholy, the poor girl little resembled the inquisitive, impatient, bounding creature who had taken de Marsay on her wings and transported him to the seventh heaven of love. There was something so real in the pleasure-veiled despair that the terrible de Marsay felt a further admiration for this new masterpiece of nature, and forgot for the nonce the principal concern of the assignation.

"What is the matter, my Paquita?"

"My friend," said she, "carry me off this very night. Take me to some place where no one can say on seeing me: 'There is Paquita'; where no person can reply: 'He has there a long-haired girl, with a golden glance.' There I could give you more pleasure than you can receive here from men. Then, when you did not love me any more, you could leave me, I would make no complaint, I would say nothing; and if you deserted me it would not then cause you any remorse, for one day passed near you, only one little day, will seem to me of more value than every other day of my life."

"I don't intend quitting Paris, my girl," replied Henri. "I am not going to leave it; I am bound by an oath to the fate of many people who are to me the same as I am to them. But I can make you an asylum in Paris where no human power can come near you."

"No," said she; "you forget women's power."

Never had a sentence pronounced by a human voice expressed so full a complement of terror.

"What could possibly come near you, if I stood between you and the world?"

"Poison!" said she. "Already Doña Concha is suspicious of you—— And," she continued, letting fall the tears which glistened along her cheeks, "it must be plain to be seen that I am not the same as I was. Well, if you abandon me to the fury of the monster who would devour me, if that is your saintly will—so be it. But come, let us have all the voluptuousness of life in our love; I beg, I weep, I cry; I might defend myself, I might perhaps be saved."

"Whom are you imploring?" he asked.

"Silence!" said Paquita. "If I obtain my desire, this would be because of my discretion."

"Give me my scarlet robe," said Henri, insidiously.

"No, no," she quickly replied; "stay as you are, one of those angels whom I have been trained to hate, and in whom I could but see a monster, while really you are the most beautiful being under the heavens," said she, stroking Henri's hair. "You don't know how near I am to an ignoramus. I have been taught nothing. Since I was twelve years old, I have been kept shut up without having seen a soul. I do not know how to either read or write; I speak only English and Spanish."

"How comes it then that you receive letters from London?"

"Letters for me? Well, here they are," said she, taking out of a Japanese vase a quantity of papers.

She held them out to de Marsay; to the surprise of the young man these letters were covered with fantastic figures something like those seen in a rebus, traced out in blood, and which seemed to express burning sentences surcharged with passion.

"But," he exclaimed, admiring the hierglyphics easily deciphered by jealousy, "are you under the power of an infernal genius?"

"Infernal!" she repeated.

"But how comes it, then, that you have been able to go out?"

"Ah!" said she, "they were afraid of losing me. I had Doña Concha between the fear of immediate death and a fury that would bring me to it. I have the curiosity of a demon; I wished to break the circle that had been built about me, which came between creation and myself; I made up my mind that I would see some young men, for I knew no other men than the Marquis and Cristemio. Our coachman and footman who accompany us are old men——"

"But you were not always kept in seclusion? Your health would——"

"Ah!" she answered, "we took walks at times, but it was during the night and in the country, on the banks of the Seine, far from the world."

"Are you not proud of being so loved?"

"No," said she. "Although well occupied, this dark, hidden life cannot be compared to that of the light."

"What do you call the light?"

"You, my beautiful Adolphe; for I would give my life for you. All the passionate things of which I have spoken and that I inspire, I have received from you. At certain times I understand

nothing of existence; but now I know how we love, and up to the present I only was loved; I loved not myself. I would leave all to follow you; take me away. If you will, take me as a plaything, but leave me when you are sick of me."

"You would not regret it?"

"Not at all," said she, allowing him to read her eyes; which, tinted in gold, shone out pure and clear.

"Am I the preferred one?" said Henri to himself, who fancied she spoke truthfully, finding himself disposed to pardon the offense in favor of a love so innocent. "I really believe she is true," he thought.

If Paquita gave any thought to the past, the least memory of such in his eyes would become a crime. He had therefore the sad thought of having an idea of this, of judging his mistress, of studying her when all given up to pleasures the most entrancing that had always descended from heaven upon those who had loved him well.

Paquita seemed to have been created for love, with a special care of nature. From one night to the other her feminine genius had made the most rapid progress. Some who saw the power and insouciance of this young man taking his pleasure, in spite of the satiety of yesterday, would find in the girl with golden eyes that which we all know is created in the woman in love and to which no man is ever given up.

Paquita responded to this passion which experienced all that truly great men feel for the infinite, a mysterious passion, so dramatically expressed in *Faust,* so poetically translated in *Manfred,* and which enabled Don Juan to rake the hearts of women, who expect to find ideas without setting limits to the search or having to set up themselves that he might chase specters; that the learned think is found in science, and that the mystical believe is found in God alone.

The hope of having at last the ideal being, for whom he had constantly struggled, without fatigue, quite ravished de Marsay, who, for the first time, or for a long while back, now opened his heart. His nerves relaxed, his coolness melted in the warm atmosphere of that brilliant soul, his sharp-edged doctrines were annulled, and happiness colored his life, the same as it had this boudoir with white and pink.

Feeling the sting of a superior voluptuousness, he was already constrained by the limits in which he was now inclosed by his passion. He would not be surpassed by this woman, so that some sort of an artificial love was formed in advance to bring rewards to his soul, and then he found, in that vanity which possesses man, that he would remain the conqueror by forces unknown to this girl; but also by throwing beyond this line, where the soul of the mistress is the same as his own, he was lost between her delicious limbs in what the vulgar so naïvely call the "imaginary space." It was tender, sweet, and communicative. It made Paquita nearly crazy.

"Why should we not go to Sorrento, Nice, or Chiavari, and there pass our lives together? Would you like this?" said he to Paquita, in a penetrating voice.

"Why do you ask me 'will you'?" she cried. "Are you willing? I don't care where it is, to be with you is my pleasure. If you would choose a retreat that

is worthy of us, then Asia is the only country where love can display its wings——"

"You are right," said Henri. "We will go to the Indies; where spring is eternal, where the ground is always covered with flowers, where man may display the clothing of sovereigns without comment, as is done in the country of imbeciles where they try to realize the chimera of equality. There in that country, where we can live in the midst of a people of slaves, where the sun forever illuminates the white palace in which we reside, where the scent of perfumes is ever in the air, where the birds sing their love, and where one may die when one loves no more."

"And where we can die together," said Paquita. "Do not put off the going until to-morrow, let us go this instant—take Cristemio."

"By my faith, pleasure is the most beautiful issue of life. On to Asia; but to go there, my child, requires much gold, and to have this gold I must arrange my business."

She understood nothing of this.

"Of gold, there is enough of that here," said she, pressing his hand.

"It is not mine."

"What does that matter?" she asked. "If we need it, take it."

"It does not belong to you."

"Belong!" she repeated. "What have I that you have not? When we have taken it, it belongs to us."

He smiled.

"Poor innocent girl; you know nothing of the things of the world."

"No, but here is something that I do know," said she, drawing Henri down on herself.

At the precise moment when de Marsay had forgotten everything, and conceived the desire of appropriating this creature forever, he received in the midst of his delight a dagger-stroke which bit by bit went to his heart, which was vexed for the first time. Paquita, who had vigorously raised herself in the air to gaze at him, now cried out:

"Oh! Margarita!"

"Margarita!" exclaimed the young man in a roar; "I now know all that I previously had doubts of."

He sprang to the cabinet in which the long dagger had been placed. Happily for Paquita and himself, the cabinet was locked. His fury was increased by this obstacle; but he recovered his tranquillity, took up his cravat, and advanced toward her with so significantly a ferocious manner, that, without knowing of what crime she was guilty, Paquita nevertheless knew that his intention was to slay her.

She made one bound and sprang to the side of the room to avoid the fatal noose which de Marsay tried to fling around her neck. There they had a contest. Each was a counterpart of the other—the suppleness, the agility, and the rage being equal. To finish the struggle Paquita threw a cushion between the legs of her lover, which flung him down, then, profiting by the respite which this advantage allowed her, she pressed the button and it was immediately responded to. The mulatto suddenly appeared. In the wink of an eye, Cristemio flung himself on de Marsay, threw him on the ground, placing his foot on his chest, with his heel turned to his throat. De Marsay at once understood that, if he struggled, he would be at that moment

crushed to death on a single sign from Paquita.

"Why do you wish to kill me, my love?" she asked.

De Marsay made no reply.

"What have I done?" she went on. "Speak, explain to us."

Henri preserved the phlegmatic attitude of a strong man when he feels that he is vanquished; of cold countenance, silent, all English, which tells of the consciousness of his dignity being for that moment overthrown. Nevertheless, he was already deep in thought, in spite of the importunity of his fury, seeing how little prudence he had shown and of the injustice of killing this girl unawares without having prepared for her death in a manner proper to assure its impunity.

"My good friend," Paquita went on; "speak to me; do not leave me without a farewell of love. I will not regard the dread which you have planted in my heart. Won't you speak to me?" said she, stamping her foot with rage.

De Marsay answered by throwing her a significant look, which plainly said:

"You shall die."

Paquita threw herself on him.

"Well, do you wish to kill me? If my death will give you pleasure—kill me."

She made a sign to Cristemio, who raised his foot from the young man and allowing her to see his face, which should give a judgment of good or ill on Paquita.

"There is a man," said de Marsay, pointing to the mulatto with a sinister gesture. "He not only has devotion, but a devotedness that obeys whom it loves without question. You have a true friend in that man."

"I will give him to you, if you wish," she replied; "he would serve you with the same devotion that he has for me, if I advise him so to do."

She awaited a word in reply, then went on, in an accent full of tenderness:

"Adolphe, speak one good word to me. It will soon be day."

Henri made no reply. This young man had one sad quality, for he looked on it as being a great thing, all this concentration of strength, which is often carried by men to extravagant lengths. Henri did not know the word "Forgive." To know how to draw back, which is certainly one of the soul's graces, was in no sense his. The ferocity of men of the North, with which English blood is strongly tainted, had been transmitted to him from his sire. He was as immovable in his good as in his bad sentiments. The exclamation of Paquita was all the more horrible for him, for he had been dethroned from the sweetest triumph which had ever aggrandized the vanity of man.

The hopes, the love, and all the feelings which had exalted him, all that had flamed in his heart and mind; then these flames, lighted by the brightness of his life, had been suddenly smothered and become cold. Paquita, stupefied, had no more power in her sadness than to give the signal for him to go.

"This is useless," said she, throwing down the bandanna handkerchief. "If he loves me no more, if he hates me, all is at an end."

She waited for a look; she did not get one, and fell upon the floor half-dead. The mulatto threw a glance on Henri which was dreadfully significant, and which, for the first time in the life

of this young man, caused him to tremble, for to few persons was given his rare intrepidity.

"If you have not loved her well, if you cause her the least pain, I will kill you," was in the sense of that quick glance.

De Marsay was conducted with the same servile care along a vast corridor lighted by early dawn, and out of the end of which he went by a secret door in the private stairway which ran to the garden belonging to the San-Réal hôtel. The mulatto, for precaution, walked along a tiled pathway which abutted on a wicket-gate giving on the street, which at this time was quite deserted.

De Marsay carefully noted everything; the carriage was in attendance; this time the mulatto did not accompany him; and, at the moment when Henri pushed his head through the curtains to look at the garden of the mansion, he met the white eyes of Cristemio, with whom he exchanged glances. On both sides this was a look of provocation, a defiance, an announcement of savage warfare, of a duel not guided by ordinary laws, in which treason and perfidy had at least admission.

Cristemio knew that Henri had condemned Paquita to death. Henri knew that Cristemio decreed his death before he could kill Paquita. Each considered himself the best.

"The adventure is complicated with a feature to make it more interesting," said Henri.

"To where does monsieur wish to go?" asked the coachman.

De Marsay was driven to Paul de Manerville's home.

During the greater part of this week Henri was away from home; where he was all this time no person knew, nor in what place he lived. This retreat saved him from the fury of the mulatto, and caused the ruin of the poor creature who had taken away all the hope she had of being loved, like as every other creature hopes for love on this earth.

The last day of the week, toward eleven at night, Henri went in a carriage to the wicket-gate of the garden of the mansion of San-Réal. Four men were in his company. The coachman was evidently one of his friends, for he went straight to his seat, like an attentive sentinel listening for the least noise. One of the three others rang the bell at the gate in the street; the second made into the garden, standing on the wall; the last, who held in his hand a bunch of keys, went with de Marsay.

"Henri," said his companion, "we are betrayed."

"By whom, my good Ferragus?"

"They are not asleep," said the chief of the *dévorants*. "It shows absolutely that none in the house has drunk or eaten anything. There, see that light?"

"We have the plan of the house. Where is she?"

"I have no need of the plan to learn that," replied Ferragus; "she is in the Marquise's room."

"Ah!" exclaimed de Marsay. "She has, without a doubt, arrived here from London to-day. That woman has not incurred my vengeance. But, if she comes in my path, my good Gratien, we deliver her to our justice."

"S—sh, listen! the deed is done," said Ferragus to Henri.

The two friends lent their ears to the

feeble cries with all the savage attention of tigers.

"Your Marquise did not think that people could come to see her kill by way of the chimney," said the chief of the *dévorants*, with the laugh of a critic, enchanted in finding a flaw in a masterpiece.

"We only, we know all things," said Henri. "Listen to me. I want to go and see how she passes up on high, in order to learn the manner of treating quarrels in their household. By the name of God, I think that she will, for a fact, be broiled on a little fire."

De Marsay lightly climbed the stairway which he knew was the way to the boudoir. When he opened the door he had that involuntary shiver which causes the most determined man to shrink from the sight of spilt blood. The spectacle offered to his gaze had, beside, for him a great meed of astonishment. The Marquise was a woman: she had calculated her vengeance with that perfection of perfidy which always distinguishes feeble animals. She had dissimulated her rage at the crime to assure its due punishment.

"Too late, my good friend," said Paquita, dying, whose pale eyes turned toward de Marsay.

The girl with golden eyes expired, weltering in her own blood. All the candles were aflame, a delicate perfume pervaded the room, a certain disorder, palpable to the eye of a clever man of the world who knows of the follies common to every passion, announced that the Marquise had skillfully tortured the guilty one. This white apartment, in which the blood showed so distinctly, betrayed a long struggle. The hands of Paquita were indented in the cushions. Everywhere she had hung on for her life, everywhere she had defended herself, and everywhere she had been stricken down. Some great fragments of the fluted tapestry had been torn down by her bloody hands, which told of a terrible and long-drawn struggle.

Paquita had tried to scale the ceiling; her naked feet had marked the long back of the divan on which she had, without doubt, run. Her body, jagged with the thrusts given with the poniard by her executioner, told well with what fury she had fought for a life that Henri had made so dear to her. She lay on the floor, and had, in dying, bitten the muscles of the instep of Mme. de San-Réal, who still held in her hand the poniard soaked in blood. The Marquise's hair was dragged askew; she was covered with bites which bled freely; her torn dress allowed her to be seen half-naked and her bosom full of scratches.

She was in a manner sublime.

Her face, covetous and full of rage, breathed the odor of blood. Her panting mouth was partly open, and her nostrils were too small for her respirations. Certain animals, when seized with rage, spring full on their foes, seeming to have lost sight of everything else. There are others who twine about their victims, who hold them in fear so that they cannot arouse themselves, and who, like Homer's Achilles, will make nine tours around the walls of Troy and drag forth their enemies by their feet. Of such was the Marquise. She did not see Henri. She was so sure of being alone that she had no fear of witnesses; then her blood was up, she was too excited by the struggle, too inflamed to see all

Paris, if all the people of Paris had formed a ring around her. She would not have felt a thunderbolt. She had not even heard Paquita's last sigh, and believed that she could still be heard by the dead.

"Dead without confession," said she to her; "gone to hell, monster of ingratitude; who cares no more for a person than the devil. For the blood which you have given him, you now give all yours to me. Die, die, suffer a thousand deaths! I have been too good; I don't seem to have taken a moment in killing you; I should like to have made you experience all the sorrow you have bequeathed me. I live, I. I live unhappy; I am reduced to loving none beside God."

Awhile she stood contemplative.

"She is dead," said she, after a pause, making a violent return to herself. "Dead! Ah! I shall die of grief."

The Marquise would have thrown herself on the divan, overwhelmed with a despair which showed itself in her voice, but this movement was prevented by seeing Henri de Marsay.

"Who are you?" said she, rushing at him with uplifted poniard.

Henri held her arm, and they stood face to face. An awful surprise seized both of them, turning the blood in their veins to ice, and their legs shook like those of horses when they are afraid. In fact, two *Ménechmes*[1] could not more resemble each other. They both spoke the same words together:

"Is Lord Dudley your father?"

Each nodded affirmatively.

"She was true to the blood," said Henri, pointing to Paquita.

"It is possible that for this she was the less guilty," replied Margarita-Euphémia Porrabéril, throwing herself on Paquita's body, with a cry of despair.

"Poor girl, I wish I could reanimate you. I have done wrong; forgive me, Paquita. You are dead, and I live, I. I am the more unfortunate."

At this moment appeared the horrible face of Paquita's mother.

"You came to tell me and sold her to death," cried the Marquise. "I know what has brought you out of your hole. I will pay you twice over. There you are."

She took out of a drawer in an ebony cabinet a bag of gold which she flung disdainfully at the feet of the old woman. The sound of the gold had the power to limn an imitation of a smile on the immobile physiognomy of the Georgian slave woman.

"I came in time for you, my sister," said Henri. "The law will allow you to reclaim——"

"Nothing," replied the Marquise. "Only one person could ask an account of that girl. Cristemio is dead."

"And this mother," said Henri, pointing to the old woman; "will she never tell anything?"

"She belongs to a country where women are not beings, but things which have neither goods nor will; who are bought and sold; who may be killed, who are, in fact, subject to every caprice, and whom everybody treats as so many chattels. Nevertheless, they have a passion to which every other is subordinate—even the love of maternity; so

[1] Doubles, in French fiction.

although she loved her daughter, she had the passion——"

"Of what?" asked Henri, quickly, interrupting his sister.

"Of gambling; from which God keep you," she replied.

"But how comes it that you assist her," said Henri, pointing to the girl with golden eyes; "is it that she may remove the traces of this fantasy, which the law would not overlook?"

"I own her mother," replied the Marquise, pointing to the old Georgian, to whom she made a sign to stay.

"We shall meet again," said Henri, who began to be uneasy about his friends, and saw the necessity for going.

"No, my brother," said she; "we shall never meet again. I shall return to Spain and there enter the convent of *Los Dolores.*"

"You are still young and too beautiful for that," said Henri, pressing her in his arms and kissing her.

"Farewell," said she; "nothing can ever console me for having sent a soul to be forever lost."

Eight hours after, Paul de Manerville met de Marsay at the Tuileries, on the Terrasse des Feuillants.

"Well, what has become of our beautiful girl with the golden eyes, great rascal?"

"She is dead."

"Of what?"

"Consumption."

A Princess's Secrets

To Théophile Gautier

After the disaster of the Revolution of July 1830 had wrecked the fortunes of many a noble family dependent upon the Court, Mme. la Princesse de Cadignan had the address to blame political events for the total ruin due in reality to her own extravagance. The Prince had left France with the royal family, but the Princess stayed on in Paris, the very fact of her husband's absence securing her from arrest. He, and he alone, was responsible for a burden of debt which could not be discharged by the sale of all his available property. The creditors had taken over the revenues of the entail, and the affairs of the great family were, in short, in as bad a way as the fortunes of the elder branch of the Bourbons. Things being thus, the Princesse de Cadignan (the lady so celebrated in her day as the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse) made up her mind to live in complete retirement, and tried to make the world forget her. And in the dizzy current of events which swept Paris away, Mme. de Maufrigneuse was soon lost to sight in the Princesse de Cadignan, and became almost a stranger to society; the new actors brought upon the stage by the Revolution of July knew nothing of the metamorphosis.

In France the title of duke takes precedence over all others, even over the title of prince; albeit it is laid down unequivocally in heraldry that

titles signify absolutely nothing, and that all the nobly born are perfectly equal. This admirable theory was conscientiously put in practice in former times by the royal house of France; indeed, it is still carried out in the letter at any rate, for kings of France are careful to give their sons the simple title of count. By virtue of the same system Francis I. signed himself "Francis, Lord of Vanves," thereby eclipsing the splendid array of titles assumed by that pompous monarch, Charles V. Louis XI. had even gone further when he gave his daughter to Pierre de Beaujeu, a simple gentleman. The feudal system was so thoroughly broken up by Louis XIV. that the title of duke in his reign became the supreme and most coveted honor.

Nevertheless, there are two or three families in France, in which the principality consists of great territorial possessions, handed down from former times, and in these it ranks above the duchy. The House of Cadignan is one of these exceptions, the eldest son is the Duc de Maufrigneuse, and the younger brothers are simply Chevaliers de Cadignan.

The Cadignans, like two princes of the House of Rohan in other times, have a right to a chair of state in their own house, and may keep a retinue of pages, gentlemen, in their service. This is a necessary piece of explanation, given partly to anticipate absurd criticisms from persons who know nothing of the matter, partly too as a record of an old stately order of things in a world which is said to be passing away, an order of things which some, who understand it but little, are very eager to abolish.

The Cadignans bear *five fusils sable conjoined in fesse,* with the motto MEMINI, and a close crown, without supporters or lambrequins. What with the prevalent ignorance of heraldry in these days, and a mighty influx of foreigners to Paris, the title of prince is beginning to enjoy a certan vogue; but it is usually only a courtesy title. There are no real princes in France save those who inherit domains with their name, and are entitled to be addressed as "Your Highness." The disdain felt for the title by the old noblesse, and the reasons which led Louis XIV. to give supremacy to the rank of duke, prevented France from claiming the style of Highness for the few princes in existence (those of Napoleon's creation excepted). This is how the Princes de Cadignan came to rank nominally below other princes on the continent of Europe.

The persons known collectively as the Faubourg Saint-Germain protected the Princess; treating her with a respectful discretion due to a name that will always be honored, to misfortunes which no longer gave rise to talk, and to Mme. de Cadignan's beauty, which was all that remained of her faded glories. The world that she had adorned gave her credit for thus taking the veil, as it were, and entering the cloister in her own house. For her, of all women, such a piece of good taste involved an immense sacrifice; and in France anything great is always so keenly appreciated, that the Princess's retreat gained for her all the ground that she had lost in public opinion while her splendor was at its height. Of her old friends

among women, she only saw the Marquise d'Espard; and as yet was never seen in public on great occasions; or at evening parties. The Princess and the Marquise called upon one another, very early in the morning, and, as it were, in secret; and when the Princess dined with her friend, the Marquise closed her doors to everyone else.

Mme. d'Espard's behavior was admirable. She changed her box at the Italiens, coming down from the first tier to a *baignoire* on the ground floor, so that Mme. de Cadignan could come and depart without being seen. Not every woman would have been capable of a piece of delicacy depriving her of the pleasure of dragging a former and fallen rival in her train, and posing as her benefactress. Thus enabled to dispense with ruinous toilets, the Princess went privately in the Marquise's carriage, which in public she would have refused to take. Nobody ever knew why Mme. d'Espard behaved in this way; but her conduct was sublime, involving a whole host of the little sacrifices which seem mere trifles in themselves, but taken as a whole reach giant's proportions. In 1832 the snows of three years had covered the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse's adventures, whitening them so effectually that nothing short of a prodigious effort of memory could recall the heavy indictments formerly laid to her charge. Of the queen adored by so many courtiers, of the duchess whose levities might furnish a novelist with several volumes, there now remained an exquisitely fair woman of thirty-six, who might have passed for thirty in spite of her nineteen-year-old son.

Georges, Duc de Maufrigneuse, beautiful as Antinous, and poor as Job, was certain of a great career; and his mother's first wish was to see him married to a great fortune. Perhaps she meant to chose an heiress for him some day out of Mme. d'Espard's salon, which was supposed to be the first in Paris; perhaps this was the real reason of her intimacy with the Marquise. The Princess, looking forward, saw another five years of retirement before her; five desolate lonely years; but if Georges was to marry well, her conduct must receive the hall-mark of virtue.

The Princess lived in a modest ground-floor flat in a mansion in the Rue de Miromesnil, where relics of bygone splendor had been turned to account. A great lady's elegance still pervaded everything. She had surrounded herself with beautiful things, which told their own story of a life in high spheres. The magnificent miniature of Charles X. above her chimney-piece was painted by Mme. de Mirbel, and bore the legend, "Given by the King," engraved on the frame. The companion picture was a portrait of Madame, who had been so peculiarly gracious to her. The album that shone conspicuous on one of the tables was an almost priceless treasure, which none of the bourgeoises that rule our modern money-making and censorious society would dare to exhibit in public. It was a piece of audacity that paints the Princess's character to admiration. The album was full of portraits, some thirty among them belonging to intimate friends—lovers, the world said. As to numbers, this was a slander; but with regard to some ten of them perhaps, as the Marquise d'Espard said, there was a good, broad

foundation for the calumny. However that might be, Maxime de Trailles, de Marsay, Rastignac, the Marquis d'Esgrignon, General de Montriveau, the Marquises de Ronquerolles and d'Ajuda-Pinto, Prince Galathionne, the young Duc de Grandlieu, the young Duc de Rhétoré, the young Vicomte de Sérizy, and Lucien de Rubempré's beautiful face, had all received most flattering treatment from the brushes of the famous portrait-painters of the day. At this time the Princess only received two or three of the originals of the portraits, and pleasantly called the book "My Collection of Errors."

Adversity had made a good mother of Mme. de Princesse. Her amusements during the first fifteen years of the Restoration had left her little time to think of her son; but now, when she took refuge in obscurity, this illustrious egoist bethought herself that maternal sentiment pushed to an extreme would win absolution for her. Her past life would be condoned by sentimental people, who will pardon anything to a fond mother, and she loved her son so much the better because she had nothing else left to love. Georges de Maufrigneuse was, for that matter, a son of whom any mother might have been proud. And the Princess had made all kinds of sacrifices for him. Georges had a stable and coach-house, and inhabited three daintily furnished rooms in the entresol above, which gave upon the street.

His mother stinted herself to keep a horse for him to ride, a cab-horse, and a diminutive servant. The Duke's tiger had a hard time of it! "Toby," once in the service of "the late Beaudenord" —for in this jocular manner young men of fashion were wont to allude to that ruined dandy—Toby, to repeat, now turned twenty-five years of age, and still supposed to be fourteen, must groom the horses, clean the cab or the tilbury, go out with his master, keep his rooms in order, and be on hand in the Princess's antechamber to admit visitors, if by any chance a visitor called on her.

When you considered the part that the beautiful Duchesse de Maufrigneuse had played under the Restoration; how she had been one of the queens of Paris, a radiant queen, leading a life so luxurious that even the wealthiest women of fashion in London might have taken lessons of her; it was something indescribably touching to see her in that mere nutshell of a place in the Rue de Miromesnil, only a few doors away from the huge Hôtel de Cadignan, which nobody was rich enough to live in, so that the speculative builder's hammer brought it down. The woman for whom thirty servants were scarce sufficient, the mistress of the finest salons and the prettiest *petits appartements* in which she entertained so splendidly, was now living in a suite of five rooms—an antechamber, a dining-room, a drawing-room, a bedroom, and dressing-room—with a couple of women-servants for her whole establishment.

"Ah! she is an admirable mother," that shrewd woman the Marquise d'Espard would remark, "and admirable without overdoing it. She is happy. Nobody would have believed that such a frivolous woman would be capable of taking a resolution and following it up so persistently as she does. And

our good Archbishop has encouraged her, he is goodness itself to her, he has just persuaded the dowager Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne to call upon her."

In any case, let us own that no one but a queen can abdicate, and descend nobly from the lofty elevation which is never utterly lost to her. It is only those who are conscious that they are nothing in themselves that will waste regrets on their decline, and pity themselves, and turn to a past that will never return for them. They know instinctively that success will never come twice. The Princess was forced to do without the rare flowers with which she had been wont to surround herself, a setting that enhanced her beauty, for no one could fail to compare her to a flower. Wherefore she had chosen her ground-floor flat with care, so as to enjoy a pretty little garden with flowering trees and a green grass-plot to brighten her quiet rooms all through the year.

Her annual income possibly amounted to twelve thousand francs or thereabouts, but even that modest sum was made up partly by an allowance from the old Duchesse de Navarreins (the young Duke's paternal aunt), partly by contributions from the Duchesse d'Uxelles, who was living on her estate in the country, and saving as none but dowager-duchesses can save; Harpagon was a mere tyro in comparison.

The Prince de Cadignan lived abroad, always at the orders of his exiled masters. He shared their adversity, serving them with a devotion as disinterested, and perhaps rather more intelligent than that of most other adherents of fallen royalty. His position was even now a protection to his wife in Paris. In such obscurity did the Princess live, and so little did her destitution arouse the suspicions of the Government, that a certain Marshal, to whom France owes an African province, used to meet Legitimist leaders at her house and hold counsel with them while Madame was making the attempt in La Vendée.

Forseeing the approaching bankruptcy of love, and the drawing nigh of that fortieth year beyond which there lies so little for a woman, the Princess launched forth into the realms of politics and philosophy. She took to reading!—she who for the last sixteen years had shown the utmost abhorrence of anything serious! Literature and politics to-day take the place of devoutness as the last refuge of feminine affectation. It was said in fashionable circles that Diane meant to write a book. During this transition period, when the beautiful woman of other days was preparing to fade into a woman of intellect, until such time as she should fade away for good, Diane made of the reception at her house a privilege in the highest degree flattering for the persons thus favored. Under cover of these occupations she contrived to hoodwink de Marsay, one of her early lovers, and now the most influential member of the Government of the Citizen King. Several times she received visits from the Prime Minister in the evening while the Legitimist leaders and the Marshal were actually assembled in her bedroom, discussing plans for winning back the kingdom, and forgetting in their deliberations that the kingdom was not to be won without the help of ideas—the one means of success overlooked by them. It was a pretty woman's revenge

thus to inveigle a prime minister and use him as a screen for a conspiracy against his own government; the Princess wrote Madame the sprightliest account of an adventure worthy of the best days of the Fronde.

The young Duc de Maufrigneuse went to La Vendée, and contrived to come back again quietly and without committing himself, but not until he had shared Madame's perils. When all seemed lost, Madame sent him back, unfortunately perhaps, for a young man's impassioned vigilance might possibly have foiled treachery.

Great as Mme. de Maufrigneuse's transgressions might have been in the eyes of the middle-class matron, her son's behavior blotted them all out for the aristocratic world. It was something great and noble surely to risk the life of an only son and the heir to an historic name in this way. There are persons, reputed clever, who redeem the faults of private life by political services, and *vice versâ*. But the Princesse de Cadignan had acted without calculation of any kind. Perhaps there is never calculation on the part of those who so conduct their lives; and circumstances account for a good half of many seeming inconsistencies.

On one of the first fine days in May 1833, the Marquise d'Espard and the Princess were taking a turn—they could scarcely be said to be taking a walk—along the one garden path beside the grass plot. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon, the sun was taking leave of the garden for the day, but the air was warm with heat reflected from the walls, and the air was full of the scent of flowers brought by the Marquise.

"We shall lose de Marsay soon," Mme. d'Espard was saying, "and with him goes your last hope of fortune for the Duc de Maufrigneuse; since you played such a successful trick on that great politician, his affection for you has sensibly increased."

"My son shall never come to terms with the younger branch, even if he must starve first and I should have to work for him," returned the Princess. "But Berthe de Cinq-Cygne has no aversion for him."

"The younger generation is not bound in the same way as the older——"

"Let us say nothing about that. If I fail to tame the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne, it will be quite bad enough to be forced to marry my son to some blacksmith's daughter, as young d'Esgrignon did."

"Did you love him?" asked the Marquise.

"No," the Princess answered gravely, "d'Esgrignon's naïveté was only a kind of provincial's callowness, as I found out a little too late, or too soon, if you prefer it."

"And de Marsay?"

"De Marsay played with me as if I were a doll. I was almost a girl. We never love the men who take the office of tutor upon themselves; they grate overmuch on our little susceptibilities."

"And that wretched boy who hanged himself?"

"Lucien? An Antinous and a great poet. I worshipped him in all conscience, and I might have been happy. But he was in love with a girl of the town; and I gave him up to Mme. de

Sérizy. . . . If he had cared to love me, should I have given him up?"

"What an odd thing, that you should come into collision with an Esther!"

"She was handsomer than I," said the Princess.—"Very soon I shall have spent three years in complete solitude," she went on after a pause. "Well, there has been nothing painful in the quiet. To you, and you only, I will venture to say that I have been happy. Adoration palled upon me; I was jaded with enjoyment; the surface impressions never went deeper into my heart. All the men that I had known were petty, mean, and superficial, I thought; not one of them did anything in the least unexpected; they had neither innocence, nor greatness, nor delicacy. I should have liked to find someone of whom I could stand in awe."

"Then, is it with you as it is with me, my dear? Have you tried to love and never found love?"

"Never," broke in the Princess, laying a hand on her friend's arm. The two women went across to a rustic bench under a mass of jessamine now flowering for the second time. Both had spoken words full of solemn import for women at their age.

"Like you," resumed the Princess, "I have been more loved, perhaps, than other women; but through so many adventures, I feel that I have never known happiness. I have done many reckless things, but always with an end in view, and that end receded as I advanced. My heart has grown old with an innocence unfathomed in it. Yes, a credulous first love lies unawakened beneath all the experience; and I feel too that I am young and fair, in spite of so much weariness, so many blighting influences. We may love, yet not be happy; we may be happy when we do not love; but to love and to be happy both, to know the two boundless joys of human experience—this is a miracle, and the miracle has not been worked for me."

"Nor for me," said Mme. d'Espard.

"A dreadful regret haunts me in my retreat; I have found pastimes, but I have not loved."

"What an incredible secret!"

"Ah! my dear, these are secrets that we can only confide to each other; nobody in Paris would believe us."

"And if we had not both passed our thirty-sixth year, perhaps we might not make these admissions."

"No. While we are young, we are stupidly fatuous on some points," assented the Princess. "Sometimes we behave like the poverty-stricken youths that play with a toothpick to make others believe that they have dined well."

"After all, here we are," Mme. d'Espard said, with bewitching grace, and a charming gesture as of innocence grown wise; "here we are, and there is still enough life in us, it seems to me, for a return game."

"When you told me the other day that Béatrix had gone off with Conti, I thought about it all night long," said the Princess, after a pause. "A woman must be very happy indeed to sacrifice her position and her future, and to give up the world forever like that."

"She is a little fool," Mme. d'Espard returned gravely. "Mlle. des Touches was only too delighted to be rid of Conti. Béatrix could not see that it

was a strong proof that there was nothing in Conti when a clever woman gave him up without making a defense of her so-called happiness for a single moment."

"Then is she going to be unhappy?"

"She is unhappy now. What was the good of leaving her husband? What is it but an admission of weakness in a wife?"

"Then, do you think that Mme. de Rochefide's motive was not a desire to experience a complete love, that bliss of loving and being loved which for us both is still a dream?"

"No. She aped Mme. de Beauséant and Mme. de Langeais, who, between ourselves, would have been as great figures as la Vallière, or the Montespan, or Diane de Poitiers, or the Duchesses d'Étampes or de Chateauroux, in any age less commonplace than ours."

"Oh, with the king omitted, yes, my dear. Ah! if I could only call up those women, and ask them if——"

"But there is no necessity to call up the dead," broke in the Marquise; "we know living women who are happy. A score of times I have begun intimate talk about this kind of thing with the Comtesse de Montcornet. For fifteen years she has been the happiest woman under the sun with that little Émile Blondet. Not an infidelity, not a thought from another; they are still as they were at the first. But somebody always comes to disturb us at the most interesting point. Then there is Rastignac and Mme. de Nucingen, and your cousin Mme. de Camps and that Octave of hers; and there is a secret in these long attachments; they know something, dear, that we neither of us know. The world does us the exceeding honor to take us for *rouées* worthy of the Court of the Regency, and we are as innocent as two little boarding-school misses."

"I should be glad to have even that innocence," the Princess exclaimed mockingly; "ours is worse, there is something humiliating in it. There is no help for it! We will offer up the mortification to God in expiation of our fruitless quest of love; for it is scarcely likely, dear, that in our Martin's summer we shall find the glorious flower that did not bloom for us in May and June."

"That is not the question," rejoined the Marquise after a pause, filled by meditative retrospect. "We are still handsome enough to inspire love, but we shall never convince anyone of our innocence and virtue."

"If it were a falsehood, it should soon be garnished with commentaries, served up with the pretty art that makes a lie credible, and swallowed down like delicious fruit. But to make a truth credible!—Ah! the greatest men have perished in that attempt," added the Princess, with a subtle smile that Leonardo's brush alone could render.

"Fools can sometimes love," said the Marquise.

"Yes; but not even fools are simple enough to believe this," pointed out the Princess.

"You are right," the Marquise said, laughing. "We ought not to look to a fool or a man of talent for the solution of the problem. There is nothing for it but genius. In genius alone do you find a child's trustfulness, the religion of love, and a willingness to be blindfolded. Look at Canalis and the

Duchesse de Chaulieu. If you and I ever came across men of genius, they were too remote from our lives, and too busy; we were too frivolous, too much carried away and taken up with other things."

"Ah! and yet I should not like to leave this world without knowing the joy of love to the full," exclaimed the Princess.

"It is nothing to inspire love," said Mme. d'Espard; "it is a question of feeling it. I see many women that are only pegs on which to hang a passion, and not at once its cause and effect."

"The last passion that I inspired was something sacred and noble," said the Princess; "a future lay before it. Chance, for this once, sent me the man of genius, our due; the due so difficult to come by, for there are more pretty women than men of genius. But the Devil was in it."

"Do tell me about it, dear; this is quite new to me."

"I only discovered his romantic passion in the winter of 1829. Every Friday at the Opéra I used to see a man of thirty or thereabouts sitting in the same place in the orchestra; he used to look at me with eyes of fire, saddened at times by the thought of the distance between us and the impossibility of success."

"Poor fellow, we grow very stupid when we are in love," said the Marquise. The Princess smiled at the friendly epigram.

"He used to slip out into the corridor between the acts," she went on. "Once or twice, to see me or to be seen, he pressed his face against the pane of glass in the next box. If people came to my box, I used to see him glued in the doorway to steal a glance. He knew everyone in my set by sight at least. He used to follow them to my box, for the sake of having the door left ajar. Poor fellow, he must have found out who I was very soon, for he knew M. de Maufrigneuse and my father-in-law by sight. Afterwards I used to see my mysterious stranger at the Italiens, sitting in a stall just opposite, so that he could look up at me in unfeigned ecstasy. It was pretty to see it. After the Opéra or the Bouffons, I used to see him planted on his two feet in the crush. People elbowed him, he stood firm. The light died out of his eyes when he saw me leaning on the arm of someone in favor. As for anything else, not a word, not a letter, not a sign. This was in good taste, you must admit. Sometimes in the morning, when I came back to my house, I would find him again, sitting on a stone by the gateway. This love-stricken man had very fine eyes, a long, thick, fan-shaped beard, a royale, and a mustache and whiskers; you could see nothing of his face but the pale skin over the cheek-bones and a noble forehead. It was a truly antique head.

"The Prince, as you know," she continued, "defended the Tuileries on the side of the Quais in July. He came to Saint-Cloud the evening that all was lost. 'I was all but killed, dear, at four o'clock,' he said. 'One of the insurgents had leveled his gun at me, when the leader of the attack, a young man with a long beard, whom I have seen at the Italiens, I think, struck down the barrel.' The shot hit somebody else, a quartermaster, I believe, two paces away from

my husband. So it was plain that the young fellow was a Republican.

"In 1831 when I came to live here I saw him leaning against the house-wall. He seemed to rejoice over my calamities; perhaps he thought that they brought us nearer together. But I never saw him again after the Saint-Merri affair; he was killed that day. The day before General Lamarque's funeral I walked out with my son, and our Republican went with us, sometimes behind, sometimes in front, from the Madeleine to the Passage des Panoramas where I was going."

"Is that all?" asked the Marquise.

"All," returned the Princess. "Oh yes; the morning after Saint-Merri was taken a boy out of the street came and must speak to me; he gave me a letter written on cheap paper, and signed with the stranger's name."

"Let me see it," said the Marquise.

"No, dear. The love in that man's heart was something so great and sacred that I cannot betray his confidence. It stirs my heart to think of that short terrible letter, and the dead writer moves me more than any of the living men that I have singled out. He haunts me."

"Tell me his name?"

"Oh, quite a common one—Michel Chrestien."

"You did well to tell me of it," Mme. d'Espard answered quickly; "I have often heard of him. Michel Chrestien was a friend of a well-known writer whom you have already wished to see —that Daniel d'Arthez who comes to my house once or twice in a winter. This Chrestien, who died, as a matter of fact, at Saint-Merri, did not lack friends. I have heard it said that he was one of those great politicians who, like de Marsay, need nothing but a turn of the wheel of chance to be on a sudden all that they ought to be."

"Then it is better that he should be dead," said the Princess, hiding her thoughts beneath a melancholy expression.

"Do you care to meet d'Arthez some evening at my house?" asked the Marquise. "You could talk with him of your ghost."

"Very willingly, dear."

Some days after this conversation, Blondet and Rastignac, knowing d'Arthez, promised Mme. d'Espard that he should dine with her. The promise would scarcely have been prudent if the Princess's name had not been mentioned, but the great man of letters could not be indifferent to the opportunity of an introduction to her.

Daniel d'Arthez is one of the very few men of our day who combine great gifts with a great nature. He had at this time won, not all the popularity that his work deserved, but a respectful esteem to which the chosen few could add nothing. His reputation certainly would increase, but in the eyes of connoisseurs he had practically reached his full development. Some writers find their true level soon or late, and once for all, and d'Arthez was one of them. Poor, and of good family, he had rightly guessed the spirit of the age, and trusted not to his ancestor's name, but the name won by himself. For many years he fought his battle in the arena of Paris, to the annoyance of a rich uncle, who left the obscure writer to languish in

the direst poverty. Afterwards, when his nephew became famous, he left him all his money, a piece of inconsistency to be laid to the score of vanity. The sudden transition from poverty to wealth made no change whatever in Daniel d'Arthez's way of life. He continued his work with simplicity worthy of ancient times, and laid new burdens upon himself by accepting a seat in the Chamber of Deputies, on the benches to the Right.

Since his name became known in the world he had occasionally gone into society. An old friend of his, the great doctor Horace Bianchon, had introduced him to the Baron de Rastignac, an under-secretary of state, and a friend of de Marsay's. These were the two politicians who nobly enough gave Michel Chrestien's friends permission to look for his dead body in the cloisters of Saint-Merri, and to bury the Republican with due honors. Gratitude for a service which contrasted strongly with the rigor used by the administration at a time when party spirit ran so high, formed a bond, as it were, between d'Arthez and Rastignac, a bond which the under-secretary of state and the illustrious minister were too adroit not to turn to account. Several of Michel Chrestien's friends held opposite opinions in politics; these had been won over and attached to the new government. One of them Léon Giraud, first received the appointment of Master of Requests, and afterwards became a councilor of state.

Daniel d'Arthez's life was entirely devoted to his work. He saw society by glimpses only; it was a sort of dream for him. His house was a convent. He led the life of a Benedictine, with a Benedictine's sober rule, a Benedictine's regularity of occupation. His friends knew that he had always dreaded the accident of a woman's entry into his life, he had studied woman too well not to fear her; and by dint of much study he knew less of his subject, much as your profound tactician is always beaten under unforeseen conditions when scientific axioms will not apply. He turned the face of an experienced observer upon the world while he was still at heart a completely unsophisticated boy. The seeming paradox is quite intelligible to anyone who can appreciate the immense distance set between faculties and sentiments—for the former proceed from the brain, the latter from the heart. A man may be great, and yet be a villain, and a fool may rise to sublime heights of love. D'Arthez was one of the richly endowed beings in whom a keen brain and a wide range of intellectual gifts have not excluded a capacity for deep and noble feeling. By a rare privilege he was both a doer and a thinker. His private life was noble and pure. Carefully as he had shunned love hitherto, he was learned in love; he knew beforehand how great an ascendancy passion would gain over him. But poverty and cold, and the heavy strain of the preparation of the solid groundwork of his brilliant after-achievements, had acted marvelously as a preservative. Then his circumstances grew easier, and he formed a commonplace and utterly incomprehensible connection; the woman certainly was good-looking enough, but without manners, or education, and socially his inferior. She was kept carefully out of sight.

Michel Chrestien maintained that men of genius possess the power of transforming the most massive women into sylphs; for them the silliest of the sex have sense and wit, and the peasant-girl is a marquise; the more accomplished the woman, the more (according to Chrestien) she loses in their eyes, because she leaves less to the imagination. He also held that love (a purely physical craving for lower natures) becomes, for the higher, the greatest achievement of the soul of man; the closest and strongest of all ties that bind two human creatures to each other. By way of justifying d'Arthez, he instanced Rafael and the Fornarina. (He might have taken himself as a model in that kind, since he saw an angel in the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse.) But d'Arthez's strange fancy was explicable in many ways. Perhaps at the outset he lost all hope of finding a woman to correspond to the exquisite visionary ideal, the fond dream of every intelligent man; perhaps his heart was too fastidiously sensitive, too delicate to surrender to a woman of the world; perhaps he preferred to do as nature bade while keeping his illusions and cultivating his ideal; or had he put love far from him as something incompatible with work, with the regularity of a cloistered life, in which passion might have worked confusion?

For some months past Blondet and Rastignac had rallied him on this score, reproaching him with knowing nothing of the world nor of women. To hear them talk, his works were numerous enough and advanced enough to permit of some diversion; he had a fine fortune, yet he lived like a student; he had had no pleasure from his fame or his wealth; he knew nothing of the exquisite delights of the noble and delicate passion that a high-born, high-bred woman can inspire and feel. Was it not unworthy in him to know love only in its gross material aspects? Love reduced to the thing that nature made it was, in their eyes, the most besotted folly. It was the glory of civilization that it had created Woman, when nature stopped short at the female; nature cared for nothing but the perpetuation of the species, whereas civilization invented the perpetuation of desire; and, in short, discovered love, the fairest of man's religions. D'Arthez knew nothing of charming subtleties of language; nothing of proofs of affection continually given by the brain and soul; nothing of desire ennobled by expression; nothing of the divine form that a high-bred woman lends to the grossest materialism. D'Arthez might know women, but he knew nothing of the divinity. A prodigious deal of art, a fair presentment of body and soul, was indispensable in a woman, if love was worthy to be called love. In short, the tempters vaunted that delicious corruption of the imagination which constitutes a Parisienne's coquetry; they pitied d'Arthez because he lived on plain and wholesome fare, and had not tasted luxuries prepared with the Parisienne's skill in these high culinary arts, and whetted his curiosity. At length Dr. Bianchon, recipient of d'Arthez's confidences, knew that this curiosity was aroused. The connection formed by the great man of letters with a commonplace woman, far from growing more agreeable with use and wont, had become intolerable to him; but the

excessive shyness that seizes upon solitary men was holding him back.

"What?" said Rastignac, "when a man bears per bend *gules* and *or,* a besant and a torteau counterchanged, why does he not allow the old Picard scutcheon to shine on his carriage? You have thirty thousand livres a year and all that you make by your pen; you have made good your motto—ARS THES*aurusque virtus,* an old punning device such as our ancestors loved—yet you will not air it in the Bois de Boulogne! Good qualities ought not to hide themselves in this age."

"If you read your work over to that fat Laforêt-like creature who solaces your existence, I would forgive you for keeping her," put in Blondet. "But, my dear fellow, if you live on dry bread, materially speaking, mentally you have not so much as a crust."

These friendly skirmishes between Daniel and his friends had been going on for some months before Mme. d'Espard asked Rastignac and Blondet to induce d'Arthez to dine with her, saying as she did so that the Princesse de Cadignan was extremely anxious to make the famous writer's acquaintance. There are women for whom curiosities of this kind have all the attraction that magic-lantern pictures possess for children; but the pleasure for the eyes is poor enough at the best, and fraught with disenchantment. The more interesting a clever man seems at a distance, the less he answers expectations on a nearer view; the more brilliant he was imagined to be, the duller the figure that he subsequently cuts. And it may be added, parenthetically, that disappointed curiosity is apt to be unjust. D'Arthez was not to be deluded by Rastignac or Blondet, but they told him laughingly that here was a most alluring opportunity of rubbing the rust off his heart, of discovering something of the supreme felicity to be gained through the love of a Parisian great lady. The Princess was positively smitten with him; there was nothing to fear; he had everything to gain from the interview; he could not possibly descend from the pedestal on which Mme. de Cadignan had placed him. Neither Blondet nor Rastignac saw any harm in crediting the Princess with this love-affair; her past had furnished so many anecdotes that she could surely bear the weight of the slander. For d'Arthez's benefit, they proceeded to relate the adventures of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse. Beginning with Her Grace's first flirtations with de Marsay, they told of her subsequent escapades with d'Ajuda-Pinto (whom she took from his wife, and so avenged Mme. de Beauséant); and of her third liaison with young d'Esgrignon, who went with her to Italy, and got himself into an ugly scrape on her account. Then they told how wretched a certain well-known ambassador had made her; how happy she had been with a Russian general; how she had acted since then as Egeria to two Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and so forth, and so forth. D'Arthez told them that he had heard more about her than they could tell him; their poor friend Michel Chrestien had worshiped her in his secret heart for four years, and all but lost his wits for her.

"I often used to go with him to the Italiens or the Opéra," Daniel said. "He and I used to rush along the streets to

keep up with her horses, while he gazed at the Princess through the windows of her brougham. The Prince de Cadignan owed his life to that love affair; a street boy was going to fire at him when Michel stopped him."

"Well, well, you will find a subject ready made," smiled Blondet. "Just the woman you want; she will only be cruel through delicacy; she will initiate you into the mysteries of refined luxury in the most gracious way; but take care! She has run through many a fortune. The fair Diane is a spendthrift of the order that costs not a centime, but for whom men spend millions. Give yourself body and soul if you will, but keep a hold of your purse, like the old man in Girodet's picture of the *Deluge*."

This conversation invested the Princess with the grace of a queen, the corruption of a diplomatist, the mystery of an initiation, the depth of an abyss, and the danger of a siren. D'Arthez's ingenious friends, being quite unable to foresee the results of their hoax, ended by making Diane d'Uxelles the most portentous Parisienne, the cleverest coquette, the most bewildering courtesan in the world. They were right; and yet the woman so lightly spoken of was sacred and divine for d'Arthez. There was no need to work upon his curiosity. He agreed to meet her at the first asking, and that was all his friends wanted of him.

Mme. d'Espard went to the Princess as soon as the invitation was accepted.

"Do you feel that you are in good looks and good form for coquetry, dear?" she asked. "Come and dine with me in a few days' time, and I will serve you up d'Arthez. Our man of genius is the shyest of the shy; he is afraid of women; he has never been in love. Here is a subject for you. He is extremely clever, and so simple that he disarms suspicion and puts you at a disadvantage. His perspicacity is altogether of the retrospective kind; it acts after the event, and throws out all your calculations. You may take him in to-day; to-morrow he is not to be duped by anything."

"Ah! if I were only thirty years old, I would have some fun," said the Princess. "The one thing wanting in my life hitherto has been a man of genius to outwit. I have always had partners, never an adversary. Love was a game, not a contest."

"Admit that I am very generous, dear Princess; for, after all, well-regulated charity——"

The women looked laughingly into each other's faces, and their hands met with a friendly pressure. Surely both of them must have been in possession of important secrets! They certainly did not take account of a man or a service to render; and any sincere and lasting friendship between two women is sure to be cemented by petty crimes. You may see two of these dear friends, each of them quite able to kill the other with the poisoned dagger in her hand; and a touching picture of harmony they present—till the moment comes when one of them chances to let her weapon drop.

In a week's time, therefore, the Marquise gave one of her small evening parties, her *petits jours*, when a few intimate friends were invited by word of mouth, and the hostess shut her door to other visitors. Five people were asked to dinner; Émile Blondet and Mme. de Montcornet, Daniel d'Arthez, Rastignac, and the Princesse de Cadignan—three

men and, including the mistress of the house, three women. Never did chance permit of more skillful prearrangement than on this occasion of d'Arthez's introduction to Mme. de Cadignan.

Even at this day the Princess is supposed to be one of the best-dressed women in Paris, and for women dress is the first of arts. She wore a blue velvet gown with large white hanging sleeves. The corselet bodice was cut low at the throat; but a sort of chemisette of slightly drawn tulle with a blue border —such as you may see in some of Rafael's portraits—covered her shoulders, leaving only about four fingers' breadth of her neck quite bare. A few sprays of white heather, cleverly arranged by her maid, adorned the fair, rippling hair for which Diane had been famous. In truth, at this moment she looked scarcely five-and-twenty. Four years of solitude and repose had restored brilliancy to her complexion; and there are moments, surely, when a woman looks more beautiful for the desire to please; the will counts for something in the changes that pass over a face. If persons of sanguine or melancholic temperament turn sallow, and the lymphatic grow livid under the influence of violent emotion, surely it must be conceded that desire and hope and joy are great beautifiers of the complexion; they glow in brilliant light from the eyes, kindling beauty in a face with a fresh brightness like that of a sunny morning. The white fairness for which the Princess was so famous had taken on the rich coloring of mature and majestic womanhood. At this period of her life, reflection and serious thought had left their impression upon her; the dreamy, very noble forehead seemed wonderfully in harmony with the slow, queenly gaze of her blue eyes. No physiognomist, however skilled, could have imagined that calculation and decision lay beneath those preternaturally delicate features. Some women's faces baffle science by their repose and fineness, and leave observation at fault; the opportunity of studying them while the passions speak is hard to come by; when the passions have spoken it is too late; by that time a woman is old, she does not care to dissimulate.

The Princess was just such an inscrutable feminine mystery. Whatever she chose to be she could be. She was playful, childlike, distractingly innocent; or subtle, serious, and disquietingly profound. When she came to the Marquise's, she meant to be a simple, sweet woman, who had known life only by its deceptions; a soulful, much-slandered, but resigned victim, a cruelly-used angel, in short.

She came early, so as to take her place beside Mme. d'Espard on the settee by the fireside. She would be seen as she meant to be seen; she would arrange her attitude with an art concealed by an exquisite ease; her pose should be of the elaborated and studied kind which brings out all the beauty of the curving line that begins at the foot, rises gracefully to the hips, and continues through wonderful sinuous contours to the shoulder, outlining the whole length of the body. Nudity would be less dangerous than draperies so artfully arranged to cover and reveal every line. With a subtlety beyond the reach of many women, Diane had brought her son with her. For a moment Mme. d'Espard beheld the Duc de Maufrig-

neuse with blank amazement, then her eyes showed that she comprehended the situation. She grasped the Princess's hand with, "I understand! D'Arthez is to be made to accept all the difficulties at the outset, so that you will have nothing to overcome afterwards."

The Comtesse de Montcornet came with Blondet, Rastignac brought d'Arthez. The Princess paid the great man none of the compliments with which ordinary people are lavish on such occasions; but in her advances there was a certain graciousness and deference which could scarcely have been exceeded for anyone. Just so, no doubt, she had been with the King of France and the Princes. She seemed pleased to see the great man of letters, and glad to have sought him out. People of taste (and the Princess's taste was excellent) are known by their manner as listeners; by an unfeigned interest and urbanity, which is to politeness what practice is to good doctrine. Her attentive way of listening when d'Arthez spoke was a thousand times more flattering than the most highly-seasoned compliments. The introduction was made by the Marquise quite simply, and with regard to the dues of either.

At dinner, so far from adopting the affectations which some women permit themselves with regard to food, the Princess ate with a very good appetite; she made a point of allowing the natural woman to appear without airs of any kind. D'Arthez sat next to her, and between the courses she entered upon a *tête-à-tête* with him under cover of the general conversation.

"My reason for procuring myself the pleasure of a meeting with you, monsieur," she said, "was a wish to hear something of an unfortunate friend of yours who died for a cause other than ours. I lay under great obligations to him, but it was out of my power to acknowledge or to requite his services. The Prince de Cadignan shares my regrets. I have heard that you were one of the poor fellow's most intimate friends, and that disinterested stanch friendship between you gives me a certain claim to your acquaintance; so you will not think it strange that I should wish to hear all that you could tell me of one so dear to you. I am attached to the exiled family, and of course hold monarchical opinions; but I am not of the number of those who think that it is impossible for a Republican to be noble at heart. A monarchy and a republic are the only forms of government which do not stifle nobility of sentiment."

"Michel Chrestien was sublime, madame," Daniel answered with an unsteady voice. "I do not know of a greater man among the heroes of old times. You must not think that he was one of the narrow Republicans who want the Convention and the Committee of Public Safety re-established with its pretty ways. No, Michel used to dream of European Federation on the Swiss model. Set aside the magnificent monarchical system which, in my opinion, is peculiarly suited to our country; and let us admit that Michel's project would mean the abolition of war in the old world, and a Europe constituted afresh on a very different basis from that of ancient conquest, modified subsequently by the feudal system. On this showing the Republicans most nearly approached his theories; and for that reason he

fought with them in July and at Saint-Merri. In politics we were diametrically opposed, but none the less we were the closest friends."

"It is the finest possible testimony to both your characters," Mme. Cadignan said timidly.

"During the last four years of his life he told me of his love for you. No one else knew about it," continued d'Arthez. "We had been like brothers; but that confidence bound us to each other even more closely than before. He alone, madame, would have loved you as you deserve to be loved. Many a wetting I have had, as he and I accompanied your carriage home, running to keep up with the horses, so as not to miss a glimpse of your face—to admire you——"

"Why, monsieur, I shall soon be bound to make compensation——"

"Why is not Michel here?" returned Daniel in a melancholy voice.

"Perhaps he might not have loved me for long," began the Princess with a sorrowful shake of the head. "Republicans are even more absolute in their ideas than we Absolutists who sin through indulgence. He would dream of me as a perfect woman no doubt; he would have been cruelly undeceived. We women are persecuted with slander; and, unlike you literary men, we cannot meet calumny and fight it down by our fame and our achievements. People take us, not for the women we are, but simply as others make us out to be. Others would very soon hide the real unknown self that there is in me by holding up a sham portrait of an imaginary woman, the true Mme. de Maufrigneuse in the eyes of the world. He would think me unworthy of the noble love he bore me, he would think I could not understand." Again the Princess shook her head with its coronet of heather among the bright gold curls. There was something sublime in the movement; it expressed sorrowful misgivings and hidden griefs that could not be uttered. Daniel understood all that it meant. He looked at her with quick sympathy in his eyes.

"Still," she said, "when I saw him again one day, a long while after the Revolution of July, I almost gave way to a wish that came over me to grasp him by the hand, then and there before everyone, in the peristyle of the Théâtre Italien, and to give him my bouquet. And then—I thought that such a demonstration of gratitude would be sure to be misconstrued, like so many generous acts that people call 'Mme. de Maufrigneuse's follies'; it will never be in my power to explain them; nobody save God and my son will ever know me as I really am."

Her murmured words, spoken with an accent worthy of a great actress, in tones so low that no one else could overhear them, must have thrilled any listener. They went to d'Arthez's heart. The famous man of letters was quite out of sight; this was a woman striving to rehabilitate herself for the sake of the dead. Perhaps people had slandered her to him; she wanted to know if anything had tarnished her name for this man who had loved her once. Had he died with all his illusions?

"Michel was one of those men who love wholly and completely," returned d'Arthez; "such as he, if they choose amiss, can suffer, but they can never give up her whom they have chosen."

"Then was I loved like that?" she cried, with a look of high beatitude.

"Yes, madame."

"And he was happy through me?"

"For four years."

"No woman ever hears of such a thing without a feeling of proud satisfaction," she said, and there was a modest confusion in the noble sweet face that turned to his.

One of the cleverest maneuvers known to such actresses is a trick of veiling their manner if words have said too much, or of talking with their eyes when other language falls short. There is an irresistible fascination in these ingenious dissonances that creep into the music of love, or true or feigned.

"To have made a great man happy," she went on (and her voice dropped lower and lower when she had assured herself of the effect that she had produced). "To have made a great man happy, and that without committing a crime—this is the fulfillment of one's destiny, is it not?"

"Did he not write to you?"

"Yes, but I wanted to be quite sure; for, believe me, monsieur, when he set me so high, he was not mistaken in me."

Women have an art of investing their utterances with a certain peculiar sacramental virtue; they can impart an indescribable something to their words, a thrill that gives them a wider significance, a greater depth; and, unless the charmed auditor subsequently takes it into his head to ask himself what those words really meant, the effect is attained —which is the peculiar aim and object of eloquence. If the Princess had worn the crown of France at that moment, instead of the high plaited coronet of bright hair and wreath of delicate heather, her brows could not have looked more queenly. She seemed to d'Arthez to be walking over the tide of slander as our Savior walked over the sea of Galilee; the shroud of her dead love wrapped her round as an aureole clings about an angel. There was not the remotest suggestion that she felt that this was the one position left to her to take up; not a hint of a desire to seem great or loving; it was done simply and quietly. No living man could have done the Princess the service rendered by the dead.

D'Arthez, worker and recluse, had had no experience of the world; study had folded him beneath its sheltering wings. Her words, her tones, found a credulous listener. He had fallen under the spell of her exquisite ways; he was filled with admiration of her flawless beauty, matured by evil fortune, freshened by retirement; he bowed down before that rarest combination—a vivid intellect and a noble soul. He longed, in short, to be Michel Chrestien's heir and successor.

The first beginnings of his love may be traced to an idea—a common case with your profound thinker. While he looked at his neighbor, while his eyes grew familiar with the outlines of her head, the disposition of her delicate features, her shape, her foot, her finely modeled hands; while he saw her now on a closer view than in the days when he accompanied his friend on his wild pursuit of her carriage, he was thinking to himself that here was an instance of that wonderful thing—the power of second-sight developed in a man under the influence of love's exaltation. How

clearly Michel Chrestien had read this woman's heart and soul by the light of the fire of love! And she too on her side had divined the Federalist; he might, no doubt, have been happy! In this way the Princess was invested with a great charm for d'Arthez; a halo as of poetry shone about her.

In the course of the dinner, d'Arthez remembered Michel's confidences, Michel's despair, Michel's hopes when he fancied that he was loved in return, and his passionate, lyrical outpourings to the one friend to whom he spoke of his love. And Daniel the while was all unconscious that he was to reap the benefit of the preparations due to chance. It very seldom happens that a confidant can pass without remorse to the estate of rival; d'Arthez could do this, and wrong no one now. In one brief moment he realized the immense distance that separate the high-bred lady, the flower of the great world, from the ordinary woman, whom, however, he only knew by a single specimen. He had been approached on his weakest side, touched on the tenderest spots in his soul and genius. His simplicity, his impetuous imagination urged him to possess this woman; but he felt that the world held him back, and the Princess's bearing, her majesty, be it said, raised a barrier between him and her. It was something new to him to respect the woman he loved; and this unwonted feeling acted in a manner as an irritant; the physical attraction grew all the more potent because he had swallowed the bait, and must keep his uneasiness to himself.

They talked of Michel Chrestien till dessert was served. It was an excuse for lowering their voices on either side. Love, sympathy, intuition—here was her opportunity of posing as a slandered, unappreciated woman! here was his chance of stepping into the dead Republican's shoes! Possibly a man of such candid mind may have detected within himself certain diminution of regret for the loss of his friend.

But when the dessert shone resplendent on the table; when the light of the candles in the sconces fell upon the rich colors of fruit and sugar-plums among the bouquets of flowers; then, under shelter of the brilliant screen of blossoms that separated the guests, it pleased the Princess to put an end to the confidences. With a word, a delicious word, accompanied by one of the glances that seem to turn a fair-haired woman into a brunette, she found some subtle way of expressing the idea that Daniel and Michel were twin souls. After this d'Arthez threw himself into the general conversation with boyish spirits, and a slightly fatuous air not unworthy of a youth at school.

The Princess took d'Arthez's arm in the simplest way when they returned to the Marquise's little drawing-room. She lingered a little in the great salon, till the Marquise, on Blondet's arm, was at some little distance from them. Then she stopped d'Arthez.

"It is my wish to be not inaccessible to that poor Republican's friend," she said. "I have made it a rule to receive no visitors, but you shall be the one exception. Do not think of this as a favor. Favors are only possible between strangers, and it seems to me that we are old friends. I wish to look on you as Michel's brother."

D'Arthez could only reply by a pres-

sure of the arm; he found nothing to say.

Coffee was served. Diane de Cadignan wrapped herself in a large shawl with coquettish grace, and rose to go. Blondet and Rastignac knew too much of the world and of courtiers' tact to try to detain her or to make any ill-bred outcry; but Mme. d'Espard, taking the Princess by the hand, induced her to sit down again.

"Wait till the servants have dined," she whispered; "the carriage is not ready."

She made a sign to the footman who carried out the coffee tray. Mme. de Montcornet, guessing that Mme. d'Espard wished to speak with the Princess, drew off d'Arthez, Rastignac, and Blondet by one of those wild parodoxical tirades which Parisiennes understand to admiration.

"Well?" asked the Marquise. "What do you think of him?"

"He is simply an adorable child; he is scarcely out of swaddling clothes. Really, even this time there will be a victory without a struggle, as usual."

"It is disheartening," said Mme. d'Espard, "but there is one thing left."

"And that is?"

"Let me be your rival."

"That is as you shall decide. I have made up my mind what to do. Genius is a kind of cerebral existence; I do not know how to reach its heart. We will talk of this later on."

After that last enigmatic remark, Mme. d'Espard made a plunge into the conversation. Apparently she was neither hurt by the words, "That is as you shall decide," nor curious to know what might come of the interview. The Princess stayed nearly an hour longer on the settee by the fireside. She sat in a listless, careless attitude, like Dido in Guérin's picture; and while she seemed to be absorbed in listening, she glanced now and again at Daniel with undisguised yet well-controlled admiration. The carriage was announced. She grasped the Marquise d'Espard's hand, bowed to Mme. de Montcornet, and vanished.

The Princess's name was not mentioned in the course of the evening. The rest of the party, however, reaped the benefit of d'Arthez's uplifted mood; he talked his best; and, indeed, in Rastignac and Blondet he had two supporters of the first rank as regards quickness of intellect and mental grasp, while the two women had long since been counted among the wittiest great ladies in Paris. To them that evening was like a halt at an oasis; it was a rare enjoyment keenly appreciated by the quartette, who lived in constant dread of the danger signals of society, politics, or drawing-room cliques. Some people are privileged to shine like beneficent stars upon others, giving light to their minds and warmth to their hearts. D'Arthez's was one of these finer natures. A man of letters, if he rises to the height of his position, is accustomed to think without restraint, and apt, in society, to forget that everything must not be said; still, as there is almost always a certain originality about his divagations, no one complains of them. It was this savor of originality, so rare in mere cleverness, this simple-minded freshness, that made d'Arthez's character something nobly apart; and in this lay the secret of that delightful evening. D'Arthez came away with the

Baron de Rastignac. As they drove home, the latter naturally spoke of the Princess, and asked him what he thought of her.

"No wonder Michel loved her," returned d'Arthez; "she is no ordinary woman."

"A very extraordinary woman," Rastignac returned dryly. "I can tell by the sound of your voice that you are in love with her already. You will call before three days are out; and I am too old a hand in Paris not to know what will pass between you. So, my dear Daniel, I beg you not to fall into any 'confusion of interests.' Love the Princess by all means if you feel that you can love her, but bear your interests in mind. She has never asked or taken two farthings of any man whatsoever; she is far too much a Cadignan or d'Uxelles for that; but to my certain knowledge she has not only squandered a very considerable fortune of her own, she has made others run through millions of francs? How? why? and wherefore? Nobody can tell. She does not know herself. Thirteen years ago I saw her swallow down a charming young fellow's property and an old notary's savings to boot in twenty months."

"Thirteen years ago!" exclaimed d'Arthez; "then how old is she?"

"Why, did you not see her son?" Rastignac retorted, laughing. "That was her son at table—the Duc de Maufrigneuse, a young fellow of nineteen. And nineteen and seventeen make——"

"Thirty-six!" exclaimed the man of letters in amazement; "I took her for twenty."

"She will be quite willing; but you need have no uneasiness on that score, she will never be more than twenty for you. You are setting foot in the most fantastic of worlds.—Good-night. Here you are at home," added Rastignac, as the carriage turned into the Rue de Bellefond, where d'Arthez lived in a neat house of his own. "We shall meet at Mlle. des Touches' in the course of the week."

D'Arthez allowed love to invade his heart after the fashion of my Uncle Toby, *videlicet,* without the least attempt at resistance. He proceeded at once to uncritical adoration, admiring the one woman and excluding all others. The Princess, one of the most remarkable portents in Paris, where everything good or evil is possible—the Princess, fair creature, became for him the "angel of his dreams," hackneyed though the expression may be, now that it has fallen on evil days. A full comprehension of the sudden transformation wrought in the illustrious man of letters is impossible, unless you remember how solitude and continual work leave the heart dormant, and how painful a connection with a vulgar woman may become, when physical cravings give place to love, and love develops new desires and fancies and regrets, and calls forth the diviner impulses of the highest regions of a man's nature. D'Arthez was, indeed, the child, the schoolboy that the Princess at once discerned him to be.

And the beautiful Diane herself received an almost similar illumination. At last she had found a man above other men, the man whom all women desire to find, even if they only mean to play with him; the power that they consent to obey for the sake of gaining control of it. At last she had discovered a great

intellect, combined with a boy's heart, and this in the first dawn of passion; and she saw, with happiness undreamed of, that all this wealth was contained in a form that pleased her.

D'Arthez was handsome, she thought. Perhaps he was. He had reached the sober age of maturity; he had led a quiet, regular life that had preserved a certain bloom of youth through his thirty-eight years; and, like statesmen and men of sedentary life generally, had attained a reasonable degree of stoutness. As a very young man he bore a vague resemblance to the portraits of the young Bonaparte; and the likeness was still as strong as it might be between a dark-eyed man with thick brown hair and the Emperor with his blue eyes and chestnut locks. But all the high and burning ambition that once shone in d'Arthez's eyes had been softened, as it were, by success; the thoughts that lay dormant beneath the lad's forehead had blossomed; the hollows in his face had filled up. Prosperity had mellowed the sallow tints that once told of a penurious life and faculties braced to bear the strain of incessant and exhausting toil.

If you look carefully at the finest faces among ancient philosophers, you can always find that those deviations from the perfect type which give to each face a character of its own are rectified by the habit of meditation, and the continual repose demanded by the intellectual life. The most crabbed visage among them—that of Socrates, for instance—acquires a well-nigh divine serenity at last. In the noble simplicity that became d'Arthez's imperial face very well, there was something guileless, something of a child's unconsciousness of itself, and a kindliness that went to the hearts of others. He had none of that politeness in which there is always a tinge of insincerity, none of the art by which the best-bred and most amiable people can assume those qualities which they have not, much to the discomfiture of their late enlightened dupes. Some sins of omission he might make as a consequence of his isolation; but he never jarred upon others, and a perfume of the wilderness only enhances the gracious urbanity of the great man who lays aside his greatness to descend to the social level, and, like Henry IV., will either lend a hand in children's games or lend his wit to fools.

If d'Arthez made no attempt at a defense, the Princess, on her return home, did not open the question again with herself. There was no more to be said, so far as she was concerned; with all her knowledge, and all her ignorance, she loved. She only asked herself if she deserved such great happiness—what had she done that Heaven should send such an angel to her? She would be worthy of this love; it should last; it should be her's forever; the last years of youth and waning beauty should be sweet in the paradise that she saw by glimpses. As for resisting it, as for haggling over herself, or coquetting with her lover, she did not even think of it. Her thoughts were of something quite different. She understood the greatness of genius; she felt instinctively that genius is not apt to apply the ordinary rules to a woman of a thousand. So after a rapid forecast, such as none but great feminine natures can make, she vowed to herself to surrender at the first summons. Her estimate of d'Arthez's character, based on

a single interview, led her to suspect that there would be time to make what she wished of herself, to be what she meant to be in the eyes of this sublime lover, before that summons would be made.

And herewith begins an obscure comedy, played on the stage of the inner consciousness of a man and woman, each to be duped by the other. *Tartuffe* is the merest trifle compared with such inscrutable comedies as this; they enlarge the borders of the depravity of human nature; they lie beyond the domain of dramatic art. Extraordinary as they are throughout, they are natural, conceivable, justified by necessity. Such a comedy is a horrible kind of drama, which should be entitled the seamy side of vice.

The Princess began by sending for d'Arthez's books. She had not read a single word of them, but nevertheless she had kept up a flattering conversation on the subject for twenty minutes without making a single slip. She proceeded to read them through, and then tried to compare his work with that of the best contemporary writers. The result was a fit of mental indigestion on the day of d'Arthez's visit. Every day that week she had dressed with unusual care; her toilet expressed an idea for the eyes to accept, without knowing how or wherefore. So she appeared in a combination of soft shades of gray; a listless, graceful, half-mourning, an appropriate costume for a woman who felt weary of life, and had nothing left to bind her to life save a few natural ties (her son perhaps). Hers, apparently, was an elegant disgust that stopped short, however, of suicide; she was finishing her allotted time in the earthly prison house.

She received d'Arthez as though she expected his visit, and had seen him at her house a hundred times, doing him the honor of treating him as an old acquaintance. The conversation began in the most commonplace way. They talked of the weather, of the Cabinet, of de Marsay's bad health, of the hopes of the Legitimist party. D'Arthez was an Absolutist. The Princess could not but know the opinions of a man who sat among the fifteen or twenty Legitimist members of the Chamber of Deputies; so she took occasion to tell the story of the trick she had played de Marsay; she touched on the Prince's devotion to the Royal family and to Madame; and thence, by an easy transition, brought d'Arthez's attention to the Prince de Cadignan.

"There is this at least to be said for him, he is an attached and devoted servant of His Majesty," said she. "His public character consoles me for all that I have suffered from his private life. But," she continued, adroitly leaving the Prince on one side, "have you not noticed (for nothing escapes you) that men have two sides to their characters? One side they show at home, to their wives; it is their true character that appears in private life; the mask is taken off, dissimulation is at an end; they do not trouble to seem other than they are; they are themselves—often they are horrible. They are great, noble, and generous for the rest of the world, for the King, and the Court, and the salons; they wear a costume embroidered with virtues and bedizened with fine language; they possess exquisite qualities

in abundance. What a shocking farce it is! And yet there are people that wonder at the smile some women wear, at their air of superiority over their husbands, their indifference——"

She broke off, but allowed her hand to drop till it rested on the arm of her chair, a gesture that rounded off her discourse to admiration. D'Arthez's eyes were intent upon her lissom figure, upon the lines so gracefully curved against the silken depths of her easy-chair; upon the movements of her dress; upon a certain fascinating little wrinkle that played up and down over her bust, a daring device which only suits a waist so slender that it has nothing to lose by it. The Princess, watching him, took up the order of her thoughts, as though she were speaking to herself.

"I will say no more," she said. "For as for women that give themselves out for 'misunderstood,' and victims of ill-assorted unions who take themselves dramatically and pose as interesting persons—that kind of thing seems to me hopelessly vulgar, and you authors have ended by making such women very ridiculous. One must either submit, and there is no more to be said, or one resists and finds amusement. In either case a woman should keep silence. It is true that I could not make up my mind to do either, but that is so much the more reason, perhaps, for keeping silence now. How silly it is to complain! If a woman is not equal to the circumstances, if she fails in tact, or sense, or subtlety, she deserves her fate. Are not women queens in France? They play with you when they choose, as they choose, and for as long as they choose."

She swung her scent-bottle, with a marvelous blending of feminine insolence and mocking gayety in her gesture.

"I have often heard contemptible little creatures regret that they were women," she continued; "and I always felt sorry for them. If I had the choice, I would be a woman over again. Ah! the pleasure and pride of owing your triumphs to strength, to all the power put in your hands by laws of your own framing! And when we see you at our feet, doing and saying foolish things for our sakes, is it not intoxicating joy to feel that the woman's weakness triumphs? So, when we succeed, we are bound to keep silence under penalty of losing our ascendency. And after a defeat, a woman's pride bids her be silent. The slave's silence dismays the master."

While this prattle was piped forth in those winning tones of gentle derision, with an accompaniment of little dainty turns of the head, d'Arthez was spellbound, just as a partridge is fascinated by the sportsman's dog. This kind of woman was something quite new in his experience.

"Tell me, madame, I beg of you, how any man could have made you suffer; be sure that where other women would be vulgar, you would be distinguished, even if you had not a manner of saying things that would make a cookery-book interesting."

"You are going far in friendship," she said, so gravely that d'Arthez grew serious and uneasy.

She changed the subject. It grew late. The man of genius, poor fellow, went away in a contrite frame of mind; he had seemed inquisitive; he had hurt her feelings; and he was convinced that she

had suffered as few women suffer. Diane had spent her life in amusing herself; she was neither more nor less than a feminine Don Juan, with this difference —if she had tempted the stone statue it would not have been with an invitation to supper, and she certainly would not have had the worst of the encounter.

It is impossible to continue this history without a word as to the Prince de Cadignan (better known as the Duc de Maufrigneuse), or the whole salt and savor of the Princess's miraculous inventions will be lost upon the reader. An outsider could never understand the atrocity of the comedy which the lady has been playing for the benefit of a man of letters. In person M. le Duc de Maufrigneuse, like his father the Prince de Cadignan, was tall and spare; he was a complete fine gentleman, his urbanity never deserted him; he made charming speeches; he became a colonel by the grace of God, and a good soldier by accident. In other respects the Prince was as brave as a Pole, showed his valor on all occasions without discrimination, and used the jargon of Court circles to hide his mental vacuity. Ever since he attained the age of thirty-six he had been perforce as indifferent to the sex as his royal master King Charles X.; for, like his master, he had found too much favor with the fair in his youth, and now was paying the penalty. He had been the idol of the Faubourg Saint-Germain for eighteen years, during which time he led the dissipated, pleasure-filled life of an eldest son.

The Revolution had ruined his father; and though after the Restoration the late Prince had recovered his post, the governorship of a royal castle, with a salary and divers pensions, he had kept up the state of a *grand seigneur* of old days, and squandered his fortune during the brief gleam of prosperity to such purpose, that all the sums repaid him by the law of indemnity went in a display of luxury in his immense old mansion. It was the only piece of property left to him, and the greater part of it was occupied by his daughter-in-law. The old Prince de Cadignan died at the ripe age of eighty-seven, some years before the Revolution of July. He had ruined his wife, and for a long time there had been something like a coolness between him and his son-in-law, the Duc de Navarreins; the Duke's first wife had been a Cadignan, and the accounts of the trust of her fortune had never been satisfactorily settled.

The present Prince (then the Duc de Maufrigneuse) had had a liaison with the Duchesse d'Uxelles. Towards 1814, when the Duke reached his thirty-sixth year, the Duchess, seeing that he was poor but stood very well at Court, gave him her daughter with a rent-roll of fifty or sixty thousand livres, to say nothing of expectations. In this way Mlle. d'Uxelles became a duchess, her mother knowing that in all probability the newly married wife would be allowed great liberty. An heir was born, after which unexpected piece of good fortune the Duke left his wife complete freedom of action, amused himself by going from garrison to garrison, spent the winters in Paris, contracted debts which his father paid, and professed the most complete indifference for his wife. He always gave the Duchess a week's warning before returning to Paris. Adored by his regi-

ment, in high favor with the Dauphin, an adroit courtier, and something of a gambler, there was no sort of affectation about the Duc de Maufrigneuse; the Duchess never could persuade him to take up an Opéra girl, out of regard for appearances and consideration for her, as she pleasantly said. The Duke succeeded to his father's post at Court, and contrived to please both Louis XVIII. and Charles X., which shows that he understood how to turn a colorless character to a tolerably good account; and besides, his life and behavior were covered over by the most elegant veneer. In language and fine manners he was a perfect model; he was popular even among Liberals. The Cadignans, according to the Prince his father, were famous for ruining their wives; in this respect, however, he found it impossible to keep up the family tradition, the Duchess was running through her fortune too quickly for him.

These little details of the family history were public property at Court and in the Faubourg Saint-Germain; so much so, in fact, that if anyone had begun to discuss them, he would have been met with a smile. A man might as well have announced the capture of Holland by the Dutch. No women ever mentioned the "charming duke" without a word of praise. His conduct towards his wife had been perfect; it was not a small thing for a man to behave himself as well as Maufrigneuse had done, he had left the Duchess's fortune entirely at her disposal; he had given her his support and countenance on every occasion. And indeed, from pride, or good nature, or from some chivalrous feeling, M. de Maufrigneuse had many a time come to the Duchess's rescue; any other woman would have gone under, in spite of her connections, in spite of the combined credit of the old Duchesse d'Uxelles, the Duc de Navarreins, the old Prince de Cadignan, and her husband's aunt. The present Prince is allowed to be one of the true nobles among the noblesse. And perhaps, if a courtier is faithful at need, he has won the finest of all victories over himself.

The Duchesse d'Uxelles was a woman of five-and-forty when she married her daughter to the Duc de Maufrigneuse, and therefore she saw her old friend's success not merely without jealousy, but with interest. At the time of the marriage she had showed herself a great lady and saved the situation; though she could not prevent scoffing on the part of spiteful persons at Court, who said that the Duchess's noble conduct cost her no great effort, albeit she had given the past five years to repentance and devotion, after the manner of women who stand in great need of forgiveness.

To return to Diane de Cadignan. The extent of the knowledge of literature which she displayed grew more and more remarkable day by day. She could venture with the utmost boldness upon the most abstruse questions, thanks to studies daily and nightly pursued with an intrepidity worthy of all praise. D'Arthez was bewildered. He was incapable of suspecting that Diane, like a good many writers, repeated at night what she read of a morning. He took her for a woman of no ordinary power. In the course of these conversations they wandered further and further from the end that Diane had in view; she tried

to return to the ground of confidential talk, but it was not very easy to bring a man of d'Arthez's temper back to a subject after he had once been warned from it. However, after a month of excursions into literature and beautiful Platonic discourses, d'Arthez grew bolder, and came every day at three o'clock. At six he took leave, only to return three hours later to stay till midnight or one o'clock in the morning. This with the regularity of an impatient lover; and the Princess, on her side, was always more or less carefully dressed at his hours. The tryst thus kept daily, the pains that they both took with themselves, their whole proceedings, in fact, expressed the feelings to which neither of them dared to confess; and the Princess divined in some marvelous way that the grown child dreaded the coming contest as much as she herself longed for it. And yet d'Arthez's manner was a constant declaration of love—a declaration made with a respect which was inexpressibly pleasant to the Princess. Every day they felt so much the more closely drawn together, because there was no convention, no sharp line of difference to arrest the progress of their ideas; no barrier was raised, as frequently happens between lovers, by formal demands on the one side, and coquettish or sincere demurs upon the other. Like most men whose youth lasts on into middle age, d'Arthez was consumed by a poignant irresolution caused by vehement desires on the one hand, and the dread of incurring his mistress's displeasure on the other. A young woman understands nothing of all this while she shares the emotion, but the Princess was too experienced not to linger over its delights. So Diane enjoyed to the full the delicious child's-play of love, finding all the more charm in it because she knew so well how to put an end to it. She was like a great artist, dwelling complacently on the vague outlines of a sketch, sure of the coming hour of inspiration that shall shape a masterpiece out of an idea that floats as yet in the limbo of things unborn. How many a time, as she saw that d'Arthez was ready to advance, she amused herself by checking him with her queenly air. She could control the tempest in the man's boyish heart, she could raise the storm and still it again, by a glance, by giving him her hand to kiss, by some commonplace word uttered in a soft, tremulous voice.

This policy of hers had been coolly resolved upon, and she acted it out divinely, gradually deepening the lines of the image engraven upon the heart of a clever man of letters of whom it pleased her to make a child. With her he was trustful, open, almost simple; and yet at times something like a reaction would set in, and she could not but admire the man's greatness, blended with such innocence. The arch-coquette's play was binding her at unawares to her bond-slave. At length Diane grew impatient with her love-sick Epictetus; and as soon as she felt that he was disposed to put a blind faith in her, she set herself to tie a thick bandage over his eyes.

One evening Daniel found the Princess in a pensive mood. She was sitting with one elbow on the table, her bright golden head bathed in the lamplight, while she played with a letter, absently tapping it upon the tablecloth. When d'Arthez had been allowed a full view of the

letter, she folded it and thrust it into her belt.

"What is the matter?" asekd d'Arthez. "You look troubled."

"I have heard from M. de Cadignan," she replied. "Deeply as he has wronged me, I have been thinking, since I read this letter, that he is an exile, and alone; he is fond of his son, and his son is away from him."

Her soul seemed to vibrate through her voice; to d'Arthez it was a revelation of a divine sensitiveness to another's pain. It touched him to the quick. His lover's eagerness to read her became, as it were, a piece of curious literary and scientific inquiry. If he could only know the height of her woman's greatness; the full extent of the injuries forgiven; and learn how near the angels a woman of the world may rise while others accuse her of frivolity and selfishness and hardness of heart! Then he remembered that once before he had sought to know this angel's heart, and how he had been repulsed. He took the slender transparent hand with its taper fingers in his, and said, with something like a tremor in his voice, "Are we friends enough now for you to tell me what you have suffered? Old troubles must count for something in your musings."

"Yes," said the fair Diane, prolonging the one syllable; Tulou's flute never sighed forth a sweeter sound. Then she drifted again into musings, her eyes clouded over; and as Daniel waited in anxious suspense, the solemnity of the moment penetrated his being. His poet's imagination beheld the cloud veiling the sanctuary; slowly the obscurity would clear away, and he should behold the wounded lamb lying at the feet of God.

"Well?" he said softly and quietly.

Diane looked into his face with its look of tender entreaty, then her eyes fell slowly, and the lashes drooped; the movement was a revelation of the noblest delicacy. A man must have been a monster to imagine that there could be a taint of hypocrisy in the graceful curve of the throat, as Diane raised her little dainty head to send a glance into the very depths of those hungry eyes.

"Can I? and ought I?" she began, with a certain hesitation, and her face wore a sublime expression of dreamy tenderness as she gazed at d'Arthez. "Men keep faith so little in such things. They feel so little bound to secrecy."

"Ah! but if you cannot trust me, why am I here?" he cried.

"Ah! my friend, does a woman calculate when she binds herself to a friendship for life?" answered Diane, and there was all the charm of an involuntary confession about her words. "It is not a question of refusing you (what can I refuse to you?); but what would you think of me if I should speak? Willingly I would tell you of my position, a strange one at my age; but what would you think of a wife who should lay bare the wounds dealt to her by her own husband, and betray the secrets of another? Turenne kept his word with thieves; ought I not to show the honor of a Turenne towards those who tortured me?"

"Have you given your word to anyone?"

"M. de Cadignan thought it unnecessary to ask for secrecy. So you would have more of me than myself? Ah! tyrant, am I to bury my honesty in

you?" and her glance made the pretended confidence seem something greater than the gift of her person.

"You rate me rather too low if you can fear any wrong whatsoever from me," he said with ill-disguised bitterness.

"Forgive me, my friend," she said. She took his hand in hers, caressing it with a most loving soft touch of her fingers. "I know all your worth. You have told me the story of your life; it is a noble, a beautiful story; it is sublime, it is worthy of your name; perhaps you think I owe you mine in return? But at this very moment I am afraid of lowering myself in your eyes by telling secrets that are not mine only. And, poet and lonely thinker as you are, perhaps you may not believe in the horrors of worldly life. Oh! when you invent your tragedies, you little know what tragedies are going on in many an apparently closely united family! You do not imagine the extent of the wretchedness beneath the gilding."

"I know all," he cried.

"No, nothing," she answered. "Ought a daughter to betray her mother?"

At those words of hers, d'Arthez felt as if he had lost his way in darkness among the Alps, and found, with the first glimpse of dawn, that he stood on the very edge of a bottomless precipice. He looked with dazed eyes at the Princess, and a cold chill crept over him. For a moment Diane thought that the man of genius was a weakling; but a flash in his eyes reassured her.

"And now, you are almost like a judge for me," she said despairingly. "And I may speak, for every slandered creature has a right to prove its innocence. I have been, nay—if anyone remembers a poor recluse, a woman forced by the world to renounce the world—I am still accused of such light conduct, of so many sins, that I may be forgiven for putting myself in the true light for the heart in which I find a refuge from which I shall not be driven forth. It has always seemed to me that self-justification tells heavily against innocence; for that reason I have always scorned to defend myself; to whom, indeed, could I speak? Painful things like these can only be confided to God, or to someone very near Him, to a priest or to a second self. Ah, well, if my secrets are not there," she added, laying a hand on d'Arthez's breast, "as they are here" (bending the busk of her corset with her fingers), "you cannot be the great d'Arthez, and I have been mistaken in you."

D'Arthez's eyes filled, and Diane drank in those tears; she gave him a sidelong glance with steady eyes and unquivering eyelids. It was as deft and neat as a cat's spring on a mouse. Then, for the first time, after sixty days of protocols, d'Arthez took the warm, moist hand, carried it to his lips, and set a kiss upon it—a slow, long kiss, drawn from the wrist to the finger-tips, taken with such delicate rapture that the Princess, bending her head, augured very well of literature. In her opinion, men of genius ought to love more perfectly than men of the world, coxcombs, diplomats, or even military men, though these certainly have nothing else to do. Diane had had experience. She knew that a man's character as a lover is revealed by very small signs and tokens. If a woman is learned in this lore, she can tell from a mere gesture what she has to expect;

much as Cuvier could examine a fragment of a fossil foot, and say, "This belonged to an animal that lived so many thousand years ago; its habit was amphibious, carnivorous, herbivorous, or what not; it had or had not horns, and so forth." She felt sure that the imagination which d'Arthez put into his literary style would show itself in his love; so she held it expedient to bring him to the highest degree of passion and belief in her. She drew her hand back at once, with a magnificent gesture fraught with emotion. If she had said in words, "No more of that, you will kill me!" she could not have spoken more forcibly. For a moment her eyes rested upon his; joy and fear and prudery and confidence and languor; a vague longing and something of a maiden's shyness were mingled in their expression. For that moment she was a girl of twenty. She had prepared, you may be sure, for that hour's comedy; never had woman dressed herself with such art; and now, as she sat in her great chair, she looked like a flower ready to open out at the first kiss of the sun. Real or artificial, whichever she was, she intoxicated Daniel.

And here, if it is permissible to hazard a personal opinion, let us confess that it would be delightful to be thus deceived for as long as possible. Talma on the stage certainly rose far above nature many a time; but is not the Princesse de Cadignan the greatest actress of our day? Nothing was wanting to her save an attentive audience. But, unfortunately, women disappear in stormy epochs; they are like water-lilies, they must have a cloudless sky and the softest of warm breezes if they are to blossom and spread themselves before our enchanted eyes.

The hour had come. Diane was about to entangle a great man in the inextricable toils of a romance that had long been growing; and he was to listen to it as a catechumen might have listened to an epistle from one of the apostles in the palmy days of the Christian Church.

"My mother, who is still living at Uxelles, married me in 1814 to M. de Maufrigneuse when I was seventeen years old (you see, my friend, how old I am). She made the match, not out of love for me, but from love of *him*. He was the only man she had ever cared for; so she repaid him in this way for all the happiness that he had given her. Oh! do not be shocked by the ugly combination; it is a thing that often happens. Some women put their lover before their children, just as most women are mothers rather than wives. The two instincts of wifely love and motherhood, developed as they are by social conditions, often come into conflict in a woman's heart. One of them must necessarily supplant the other, unless both kinds of love are equally strong, as sometimes happens with an extraordinary woman, the glory of our sex. A man of your genius surely will understand these things; fools wonder at them, yet they are none the less founded in nature. I will go further, they are justifiable by differences in character, temperament, situation, and the nature of the attachment. If I myself, for instance, at this moment,—after twenty years of misfortune, and disappointment, and heavy trials, and hollow pleasures, and slander which I could not refute—if I were offered a true and lasting love,

might I not feel ready to fling myself at the feet of the man who offered it? If I did, would not the world condemn me? And yet, surely twenty years of wretchedness ought to buy absolution for twelve years given to a pure and hallowed love—the twelve years of life that remain before I fade? But it will not be; I am not foolish enough to diminish my merits in the eyes of God. I have borne the burden and heat of the day until evening; I will finish my day; I shall have earned my reward——"

"What an angel!" thought d'Arthez.

"In short, though the Duchesse d'Uxelles cared more for M. de Maufrigneuse than for the poor Diane whom you see before you, I have never borne her a grudge. My mother had scarcely seen me; she had forgotten me; but her behavior to me, as between woman and woman, was bad; and what is bad between woman and woman becomes hateful between mother and daughter. Mothers that lead such a life as the Duchesse d'Uxelles led keep their daughters at a distance: I only 'came out' a fortnight before my marriage. Judge of my innocence! I knew nothing; I was incapable of guessing the motives that brought the match about. I had a fine fortune—sixty thousand livres a year from forests, which they either could not sell or had forgotten to sell during the Revolution, and the Château d'Anzy in the Nivernais to which the forest belonged. M. de Maufrigneuse was burdened with debts. If I afterwards came to understand what debts meant, at the time of my marriage I was too completely ignorant of life to suspect the significance of the word. The accumulated interest of my fortune went to pacify my husband's creditors.

"M. de Maufrigneuse was thirty-eight years old when I was married to him; but those years were like a soldier's campaigns, they should count double. Ah, he was far more than seventy-six years old. My mother at the age of forty had still some pretensions to beauty; and I found that I was between jealousy on either side. What a life I led for the next ten years! . . . Ah! if people but knew how the poor, much suspected young wife suffered! To be watched by a mother who was jealous of her own daughter! Ah, God! . . . You writers of tragedies will never invent a drama so dark and so cruel! I think, from the little I know of literature, that a play as a rule is a series of events, conversations, and actions which lead to the catastrophe; but this thing of which I am speaking to you is a most dreadful catastrophe without end. It is as if the avalanche that fell this morning should fall again at night—and yet again next morning. A cold shudder runs through me while I speak of it, while I light up the cavern from which there was no escape, the cold, gloomy place where I used to live. If you must know all, the birth of my child—altogether mine, indeed, for you must surely have been struck by his likeness to me? —he has my hair, my eyes, the outline of my face, my mouth, my smile, my chin, my teeth—well, my child's birth was due either to chance or to some agreement between my mother and my husband. For long after my marriage I was still a girl; I was abandoned, so to speak, directly afterwards; I was a mother, but a girl still. The Duchess

was pleased to prolong the period of ignorance, and to attain this end a mother has horrible advantages. As for me, a poor, little creature brought up like a mystic rose in a convent, I knew nothing of married life, I developed late, and felt very happy; I rejoiced over the good understanding and the harmony that prevailed in the family. I did not care much for my husband, and he took no pains to please me; and at length my thoughts were altogether diverted from him by the first joys of motherhood, joys the more keenly felt because I had no suspicion that there could be any others. So much had been dinned into my ears about the respect that a mother owed herself! And besides, a girl always loves to 'play at mamma.' At that age a child is as good as a doll. I was so proud too to have that lovely flower, for Georges was a lovely child—a wonder! How could one think of society while one had the pleasure of nursing and tending a little angel? I adore little children while they are quite little and pink and while. So I saw no one but my baby; I lived with him; I would not allow his nurse to dress or undress him or to change his clothes. The little cares that grow so wearisome to the mother of a regiment of babes were all pure pleasure to me. But after three or four years, as I am not altogether a fool, the light broke in upon me in spite of all the pains they took to bandage my eyes. Can you imagine me when the awakening came, four years afterwards, in 1819? *Deau Frères Ennemis* is a rose-water tragedy compared with the dramatic situation in which the Duchess and I, mother and daughter, were placed with regard to each other. Then I defied both her and my husband, by flirting publicly in a way that made people talk. Heaven knows what they did not say. You can understand, my friend, that the men with whom I was accused of light conduct were simply daggers that I used to defend myself against the enemy. My thoughts were so full of revenge that I did not feel the wounds that I dealt myself. I was innocent as a child; people looked upon me as a depraved woman, one of the worst of women. I knew nothing of this.

"The world is very stupid, very ignorant, very blind. People only penetrate into the secrets that interest them and serve their spite; but when the greatest and noblest things are to be seen, they put their hands before their eyes. And yet, it seems to me that the pride that thrilled through me and shook me in those days, the indignant innocence in my expression and attitudes, would have been a godsend to a great painter. The tempest of anger in me must have flashed like lightning through a ball-room; my disdain must have poured out like a flood. It was wasted passion. Nothing save the indignation of twenty years can rise to such sublime tragic heights. As we grow older we cannot feel indignant, we are tired; evil is not a surprise; we grow cowardly, we are afraid. As for me, I made fine progress. I acted like the veriest fool; I bore the blame of wrongdoing, and had none of the pleasure. I enjoyed compromising myself. I played child's tricks.

"I went to Italy with a hare-brained boy; he made love to me, and I threw him over; but when I found out that he had got himself into a scrape on my

account (he had forged a bill), I hurried to the rescue. My mother and my husband, who knew the secret of it all, kept a tight hand over me as an extravagant wife. Oh! that time I went to the King. Louis XVIII., though he had no heart, was touched. He gave me a hundred thousand francs out of the privy purse. The Marquis d'Esgrignon (you may perhaps have met him in society, he married a very rich heiress afterwards), the Marquis d'Esgrignon was rescued from the depths into which he plunged for me. This adventure, brought about by my heedlessness, made me reflect. I saw then that I was the first to suffer from my revenge. My mother and husband and father-in-law had everyone on their side; they stood to all appearances between me and the consequences of my recklessness. My mother knew that I was far too proud, too great, too truly a d'Uxelles, to do anything commonplace; about this time she grew frightened by the mischief she had done. She was fifty-two years old. She left Paris and went to live at d'Uxelles. Now she repents of her sins towards me, and expiates them by the most extravagant devotion and boundless love. But in 1823 she left me alone, face to face with M. de Maufrigneuse.

"Oh, my friend, you men cannot know what an elderly man of pleasure is; nor what a house is like when a man is accustomed to have women of the world burning incense before him, and finds neither censer nor perfumes at home; when he is dead to everything, and jealous for that very reason. When M. de Maufrigneuse was mine alone, I tried, I tried to be a good wife; but I came into conflict with the asperities of a morose temper, with all the fancies of an effete voluptuary; the driveling puerilities, the vain self-sufficiency of a man who was, to tell truth, the most tedious, maundering grumbler in the world. He treated me like a little girl; it gave him pleasure to humiliate me on every occasion, to crush me with the bludgeon of his experience, and to show me how completely ignorant I was. He mortified me at every moment. He did everything, in fact, to make himself detestable and to give me a right to deceive him; but for three or four years I was the dupe of my own heart and my desire to do right. Do you know what a shameful speech it was that urged me to fresh recklessness? Could you imagine the supreme lengths to which slander is carried in society?—'The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse has gone back to her husband,' people said.—'Pooh! out of sheer depravity; it is a triumph to quicken the dead, nothing else remains for her to do,' replied my best friend, a relative at whose house I had the pleasure of meeting you."

"Mme. d'Espard!" exclaimed Daniel, aghast.

"Oh, I have forgiven her, my friend. The speech was extremely clever, to go no further, and I may perhaps have said more cruel things of other unhappy women who were quite as pure as I was."

Again d'Arthez kissed her hands. The sainted woman had chopped her mother in pieces and served her up to him; the Prince de Cadignan, whose acquaintance we have previously made, had been put forward as an Othello of the blackest dye; and now she was acknowledging her faults and scourging

herself vigorously—all to assume, for the eyes of this guileless man of letters, that virgin estate which the simplest woman tries at all costs to offer to her lover.

"You can understand, my friend, that when I went back into the world, it was to make a sensation, and I intended to make a sensation. There were fresh struggles to be gone through; I had to gain independence and to counteract M. de Maufrigneuse. So I began a life of dissipation for new reasons. I tried to forget myself, I tried to forget real life in a life of dreams; I shone in society, I entertained; I was a Princess, and I got into debt. At home I found forgetfulness in sleep. Beautiful, high-spirited, and reckless, I began a new life in the world; but in the weary struggle between dreams and reality, I ran through my fortune.

"The revolt of 1830 came just as this chapter out of the *Arabian Nights* drew to an end; and just at that time I found the pure and sacred loved which I longed to know. (I am frank with you!) It was not unnatural (admit) that when a woman's heart had been repressed again and again by fate, it should awaken at last at the age when a woman sees that she has been cheated of her due? I saw that so many women about me were happy through love. Oh! why was Michel Chrestien so much in awe of me? There again is another irony in my life. There was no help for it. When the crash came I had lost everything; I had not a single illusion left; I had pressed out the last drops of all experience, but of one fruit I had not tasted, and I had neither taste nor teeth left for it. In short, by the time I was obliged to leave the world I was disenchanted. There was something providential in this, as in the insensibility that prepares us for death," she added, with a gesture full of religious unction.

"Everything that happened just then helped me," she continued; "the downfall and ruin of the Monarchy buried me out of sight. My son makes up to me for a great deal. Motherhood compensates us for all our thwarted powers of loving. People are astonished by my retreat, but I have found happiness. Oh! if you but knew how happy the poor creature before you has grown. The joys which I have not known, and shall never know, are all forgotten in the joy of sacrificing myself for my son's sake. Who could think that life, for the Princesse de Cadignan, would be summed up by a wretched marriage-night, the adventures with which she is credited, and a childish defiance of two dark passions? Nobody could believe it. At this day I am afraid of everything. I remember so many delusions and misfortunes that I should be sure to repulse genuine feeling, and pure love for love's sake; just as rich men repulse the deserving poor because some hypocritical knave has disgusted them with charity. All this is horrible, is it not? But, believe me, this that I have told you is the history of many another woman."

The last words were spoken in light jesting tones, which recalled the flippant woman of fashion. D'Arthez was dazed. The convict sent to the hulks for robbery and murder with aggravating circumstances, or for forging a signature

on a bill, was in his eyes a saintly innocent compared with men and women of the world. The atrocious jeremiad had been forged in the arsenal of falsehood, and dipped in the waters of the Parisian Styx; there was an unmistakable ring of truth in the Duchess's tones. D'Arthez gazed at her for a little while; and she (adorable woman) lay in the depths of her great chair, her white hands resting over the arms like drops of dew at the edge of a flower-petal. She was overcome by her own revelations; she seemed to have lived again through all her past sorrows as she spoke of them, and now sank exhausted. She was an angel of melancholy in fact.

Suddenly she sat upright, and raised her hand, while lightnings blazed in the eyes that were supposed to be purified by twenty years of chastity. "Judge of the impression that your friend's love must have made on me!" she cried, "but by the savage irony of fate—or was it God's irony?—he died; he died when (I confess it) I was so thirsty for love that if a man had been worthy of me, he would have found me weak; he died to save the life of another, and that other was—who but M. de Cadignan? Are you surprised to find me pensive?"

It was the last stroke. Poor d'Arthez could bear no more. He fell on his knees before her, he hid his face in her hands, and his tears fell fast—happy tears, such as angels might shed, if angels weep. And since Daniel's face was hidden, Mme. de Cadignan could allow a mischievous smile of triumph to steal across her mouth, a smile such as monkeys might summon up over a piece of superlative mischief, if monkeys laugh.

"Aha! I have him fast!" thought she.

And true enough, she had him fast.

"Then you are——" He began raising that fine head of his to gaze lovingly into her eyes.

"Virgin and martyr," she finished his sentence for him, smiling at the commonplace phrase, but her cruel smile lent an enchanting significance to the words. "I laugh," she said, "because I am thinking of the Princess as the world knows her, of that Duchesse de Maufrigneuse to whom the world assigns de Marsay as a lover; and the villainous political bravo, de Trailles; and empty-headed little d'Esgrignon, and Rastignac, and Rubempré, and ambassadors and Cabinet ministers and Russian generals,—and all Europe, for anything I know. There has been much gossip about this album that I had made; people believe that all my admirers were my lovers. Oh! it is shocking! I cannot think how I can suffer a man at my feet; I ought to despise them all; that should be my creed."

She rose and stood in the window; her manner of going was full of magnificent suggestion.

D'Arthez stayed on the hearth-stool where he had been sitting. He did not dare to follow the Princess, but he gazed at her, he heard her use her handkerchief. It was a pure matter of form; what is a princess that blows her nose? Diane tried to do the impossible to confirm d'Arthez's belief in her sensibility. His angel was in tears! He flew to her, put his arm about her waist, and held her tightly to him.

"No, no, leave me," she murmured

faintly. "I have too many doubts to be good for anything. The task of reconciling me with life is beyond a man's strength."

"Diane! I will give you love for all the life that you have lost!"

"No, do not talk to me like that," she answered. "I feel guilty; I am trembling at this moment as if I had committed the worst of sins."

Diane had recovered a little maid's innocence, yet nevertheless she stood before him august and great and noble as a queen. It was a clever maneuver, so clever that she had wheeled round from seeming, and reached the actual truth; and as for d'Arthez, no words will describe the effect produced by it upon his inexperience and open nature. Great man of letters as he was, he stood dumb with admiration, a passive spectator, waiting for a word, while the Princess waited for a kiss. But she had grown too sacred to him for that. Diane felt cold in the window; her feet were freezing; she went back to her old position in the chair.

"He will be a long while about it," thought she, looking at Daniel with a proud forehead and face sublime with virtue.

"Is she a woman?" the profound observer of human nature was asking of himself. "How should one act with her?"

They spent their time till two o'clock in the morning in the fond, foolish talk that such women as the Princess can turn into adorable intercourse. She was too old, she said, too faded, too much of a wreck; d'Arthez proved to her that she had the most delicate, soft, and fragrant skin: delicious to touch, and white and fair to see, of which things she was fully convinced in her own mind. She was young; she was in her flower. Her beauty was disputed, charm by charm, detail by detail, with—"Do you think so,—You are raving!—This is desire.—In a fortnight you will see me as I am.—In truth, I am verging on forty; how should anyone love a woman of my age?"

D'Arthez was impetuous as a schoolboy, his eloquence was sown thickly with the most extravagant words. And the Princess, listening, laughed within herself, while she heard the ingenious writer talking like a love-sick lieutenant, and seemed to drink in the nonsense, and to be quite touched by it.

Out in the street d'Arthez asked himself whether he ought not to have been less in awe of her. As he went through the strange confidences that had been made to him—naturally, they have been much abridged and condensed here, for the mellifluous utterances given in full, with their appropriate commentary of expression and gesture, would fill a volume—as he looked through his memory, the plausibility of the romance, the depths below the surface, and the Princess's tones, all combined to foil the retrospective sagacity of an acute but straightforward man.

"It is true," he told himself as he lay wide awake, "it is true that there are tragedies in society. Society hides such horrors as this beneath the flowers of delicate luxury, the embellishments of scandal, and the sparkle of anecdotes. We cannot imagine anything that has not happened. Poor Diane! Michel caught a glimse of the enigma when he told us that there were volcanic fires

under the ice! And Bianchon and Rastignac are right too. When a man can find his high ideals and the intoxication of desire both blended in the love of a woman—a woman of quick intelligence and refinement and dainty ways—it must surely be unspeakable bliss."

He tried to fathom the love in his heart, and found no limits.

Towards two o'clock next day, Mme. d'Espard called on the Princess. An intense curiosity brought her. For more than a month she had neither seen her friend nor received a single tell-tale word. Nothing could be more amusing than the first half hour of the conversation between two daughters of Eve endowed with the wisdom of the serpent. Diane de Cadignan shunned the subject of d'Arthez as she would avoid a yellow dress. And the Marquise wheeled about the question as a Bedouin Arab might hover about a rich caravan. Diane enjoyed the situation; the Marquise grew furious. Diane was watching her opportunity; she meant to turn her dear friend to account as a sporting dog. And one of the two celebrated women was more than a match for the other. The Princess rose a head above the Marquise; and Mme. d'Espard in her own mind admitted her inferiority. Herein, possibly, lay the secret of the bond between them. The weaker spirit of the two lay low, feigning an attachment, watching for the moment so long looked for by the weak, the chance of springing at the throat of the strong, and leaving the impress of one joyous bite. Diane saw this perfectly well. The rest of the world was completely deceived by the amenities that passed between the two dear friends.

The Princess waited; and as soon as she saw the question rise to her friend's lips, she said, "Well, dear; I owe a great, complete, and boundless happiness to you."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you remember our ruminations three months ago, as we sat out in the garden on the bench under the jessamine in the sun? Ah! well; no one can love like a man of genius. I would willingly say of my great Daniel d'Arthez as Catherine de' Medici said of the Duke of Alva, 'One salmon's head is worth all the frogs' heads in the world.'"

"I am not at all surprised that you do not come to me," said Mme. d'Espard.

"Promise me, my angel, if he goes to see you, not to say a word of me," continued the Princess, as she took the Marquise's hand. "I am happy—oh! happy beyond words—and you know how far an epigram or a jest may go in society. A word can be fatal; some people can put so much poison in a word. If you only knew how I have wished during the past week that you too might find such a passionate love! And, indeed, it is sweet; it is a glorious triumph for us women if we may finish our lives as women thus, with an ardent, pure, complete, whole-hearted, and devoted love to soothe us at last after so long a quest."

"Why ask me to be true to my best friend?" said Mme d'Espard. "Can you think me capable of playing you a vile trick?"

"When a woman possesses such a treasure, it is so natural to fear to lose it, that he thought of fear occurs to

her at once. I am absurd. Forgive me, dear."

A few moments later, the Marquise took leave.

"What a character she will give me!" thought the Princess as she watched her departure. "But I will save her the trouble of tearing Daniel away; I will send him to her at once."

Daniel came in a few minutes afterwards. In the middle of an interesting conversation the Princess suddenly interrupted him, laying her beautiful hand on his arm.

"Forgive me, my friend, but I might forget to mention something; it seems a silly trifle, yet it is a matter of the utmost importance. You have not set foot in Mme. d'Espard's house since that day—a thousand times blessed!—when I met you for the first time. Go to her; not out of politeness, but for my sake. Perhaps she may be offended with me; she may possibly have chanced to hear that you have scarcely left my house, so to speak, since her dinner-party. And besides, my friend, I should not like you to give up your connections and society, nor your work and occupations. I should be more outrageously slandered than ever. What would they not say of me?—'That I am holding you in a leash, that I am monopolizing you, that I am afraid of comparisons, that I want to be talked about even now, and I am taking good care to keep my conquest, for I know that it will be the last'—and so on and so on. Who could guess that you are my one and only friend? If you love me as you tell me you do, you will make people believe that we are to each other as brother and sister and nothing more. —Go on."

There was an ineffable sweetness in the way in which this charming woman arranged her robes so as to fall gracefully; it always schooled d'Arthez into obedience. A vague, subtle refinement in her discourse touched him even to tears. Other women might haggle and dispute the way inch by inch, in sofa-converse; the Princess rose at once above all ignoble and vulgar bargainings to a height of greatness unknown before. She had no need to utter a word, they understood their union nobly. It should be when they willed it upon either side; there was no yesterday, to-day, or to-morrow for them; there should be none of the interminable hoisting of the pennon styled "sacrifice" by ordinary women, doubtless because they know how much they are certain to lose, while a woman who has everything to gain knows that the festival will be her day of triumph.

Diane's words had been vague as a promise, sweet as hope, and binding, nevertheless, as a pledge. Let it be admitted at once, the only women who can rise thus high are illustrious and supreme deceivers like Diane; they are queens still when other women find a lord and master. By this time d'Arthez had learned to measure the distance that separates these few from the many. The Princess was always beautiful, never wanting to herself. Perhaps the secret lies in the art with which a great lady can lay veil after veil aside, till in this position she stands like an antique statue. To retain a single shred would be indecent. The bourgeoise always tries to clothe herself.

Broken to the yoke by tenderness, and sustained by the noblest virtues, d'Arthez obediently went to Mme. d'Espard's. On him she exerted her most charming coquetry. She was very careful not to mention the Princess' name; she merely asked him to dine with her at an early date.

On that day d'Arthez found a large party invited to meet him. The Marquise had asked Rastignac, Blondet, the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto, Maxime de Trailles, the Marquis d'Esgrignon, the two Vandenesses, du Tillet (one of the richest bankers in Paris), the Baron de Nucingen, Nathan, Lady Dudley, one or two of the wiliest attachés from the embassy, and the Chevalier d'Espard. The Chevalier, be it said, was one of the most astute personages in the room, and counted for a good half in the schemes of his sister-in-law.

Maxime de Trailles turned to d'Arthez.

"You see a good deal of the Princesse de Cadignan, don't you?" he asked, with a laugh.

D'Arthez replied with a stiff inclination of the head. Maxime de Trailles was a bravo of a superior order; he feared neither God nor man; he shrank from nothing. Women had loved him, he had ruined them, and made them pledge their diamonds to pay his debts; but his shortcomings were covered by a brilliant veneer, by charming manners, and a diabolical cleverness. Everybody feared him, everybody despised him; but nobody was bold enough to treat him with anything short of extreme civility. He could see nothing of all this, or possibly he lent himself to the general dissimulation. De Marsay had helped him to reach the highest elevation that he could attain. De Marsay, having known Maxime from old, judged him capable of fulfilling certain diplomatic functions in the secret service, of which Maxime had, in fact, acquitted himself to admiration. D'Arthez had been mixed up in political affairs for some time past; he knew enough of the man to fathom his character; and he alone, it may be, was sufficiently high-minded to say aloud what others thought.

"It is for her, no tout, dat you neklect de Chaimper," put in the Baron de Nucingen.

"Ah! a man could not set foot in the house of a more dangerous woman," the Marquis d'Esgrignon exclaimed, lowering his voice. "My disgraceful marriage is entirely owing to her."

"Dangerous?" repeated Mme. d'Espard. "You must not say such things of my best friend. Anything that I have ever heard or seen of the Princess seemed to me to be prompted by the highest motives."

"Pray, let the Marquis say his say," said Rastignac. "When a man has been thrown by a mettled horse, he will pick faults in the animal and sell it."

The Marquis d'Esgrignon was nettled by the speech. He looked across at Daniel d'Arthez.

"Monsieur is not on such terms with the Princess that we may not speak of her, I hope?"

D'Arthez was silent; and d'Esgrignon, who did not lack wit, retorted on Rastignac with an apologetic portrait of Mme. de Cadignan. His sketch set the table in good-humor; but as d'Arthez was absolutely in the dark, he bent over to Mme. de Montcornet and asked her to explain the joke.

"Well, judging by the good opinion that you have of the Princess, you are an exception; but all the other guests, it would seem, have been in her good graces."

"I can assure you that that view is totally false," returned Daniel.

"Yet here is M. d'Esgrignon, of a noble Perche family, who was utterly ruined for her twelve years ago, and all but went to the scaffold besides."

"I know about it," said d'Arthez. "Mme. de Cadignan rescued M. d'Esgrignon from the Assize Court, and this is how he shows his gratitude to-day."

Mme. de Montcornet stared at d'Arthez; she looked almost dazed with astonishment and curiosity. Then she glanced at Mme. d'Espard, as who should say, "He is bewitched!"

During this short conversation Mme. d'Espard had defended her friend; but her defense, after the manner of a lightning conductor, had drawn down the tempest. When d'Arthez gave his attention to the general conversation, Maxime de Trailles brought out his epigram.

"In Diane's case, depravity is not the effect but the cause; perhaps her exquisite naturalness is due to this; she does not try after studied effects; she invents nothing. She brings you out the most subtle refinements as the sudden inspiration of the most artless love; and you cannot help believing her too."

The phrase might have been prepared for a man of d'Arthez's caliber; it came out with such effect that it was like a conclusion. Nobody said any more of the Princess; she semed to be disposed of. But d'Arthez looked first at de Trailles and then at d'Esgrignon, with a sarcastic expression.

"She took a leaf out of a man's book, that has been her greatest mistake," he said. "Like a man, she squanders marriage jewels, she sends her lovers to the money-lenders, she ruins orphans, she devours dowries, she melts down old châteaux, she inspires crimes—and perhaps commits them herself—but——"

Never in their lives had either of the two personages addressed heard language so much to the purpose. When d'Arthez came to a pause on that *but*, the whole table was dumfounded; the spectators sat, fork in hand, looking from the intrepid man of letters to the Princess's treacherous enemies. There was an awful pause; they waited to see what would come next.

"*But*," pursued d'Arthez, with satirical flippancy, "Mme. de Cadignan has this one advantage over men. If anyone risks himself for her, she comes to the rescue, and says no ill of any man afterwards. Why should not one woman, among so many, amuse herself with men, as men play with women? Why should not the fair sex take a turn at that game from time to time?——"

"Genius is more than a match for cleverness," said Blondet, addressing Nathan.

And, indeed, d'Arthez's avalanche of epigrams was like a reply from a battery to a discharge of musketry. They hastened to change the subject. Neither the Comte de Trailles nor the Marquis d'Esgrignon felt disposed to try conclusions with d'Arthez. When coffee was served, Blondet and Nathan went over to him with an alacrity which no one

cared to imitate, so difficult was it to reconcile admiration of his behavior with the fear of making two powerful enemies.

"We knew before to-day that your character is as great as your talent," said Blondet. "You bore yourself just now not like a man, but rather as a god. Not to be carried away by one's feelings or imagination, not to blunder into taking up arms in the defense of the woman one loves (as people expected you to do), a blunder which would have meant a triumph for these people, for they are consumed with jealousy of celebrated men of letters—ah! permit me to say that this is the supreme height of statecraft in private life."

"You are a statesman," added Nathan. "It is as clever as it is difficult to avenge a woman without defending her."

"The Princess is one of the heroines of the Legitimist party," d'Arthez returned coolly; "surely it is the duty of every gentleman to champion her on those grounds? Her services to the cause would excuse the most reckless life."

"He will not show his hand," said Nathan to Blondet.

"Just as if the Princess were worth the trouble," added Rastignac, as he joined the group.

D'Arthez went to the Princess. She was waiting for him in an agony of anxiety. She had authorized an experiment which might prove fatal. For the first time in her life she suffered at heart, and a perspiration broke out over her. Others would tell d'Arthez the truth, she had told him lies; if he should believe the truth, she did not know what she should do; for a character so noble, a man so complete, a soul so pure, a conscience so ingenuous, had never passed through her hands before. It was because she longed to know a true love that she had woven such a tissue of cruel lies. She felt that poignant love in her heart, she loved d'Arthez, and she was condemned to deceive him, for him she must always be the sublime actress who had played this comedy for his benefit. She heard d'Arthez's step in the dining-room with a great agitation; a shock quivered through the very springs of existence. Then she knew that her happiness was at stake; she had never felt such emotion before, yet hers had been a most adventurous life for a woman of her rank. With eyes gazing into space, she saw d'Arthez in one complete vision, saw through the outward form into his inmost soul. Suspicion had not so much as brushed him with her bat's wing! The reaction set in after the terrible throes of fear, and joy almost overcame Diane; for every creature is stronger to bear pain than to stand the extreme of happiness.

"Daniel!" she cried, rising to her feet and holding out her arms, "I have been slandered, and you have avenged me."

Daniel was utterly astounded by the words, for the roots of them lay far down out of his sight. He felt two beautiful hands clasp his face, and the Princess kissed him reverently on the forehead.

"How did you know?——"

"Oh, illustrious simpleton! do you not see that I love you madly?"

From that day there was no more

question of the Princesse de Cadignan or of d'Arthez. The Princess has since inherited some property from her mother; she spends her summers with the great man of letters in a villa at Geneva, returning to Paris for a few months during the winter. D'Arthez only shows himself at the Chamber. What is still more significant, he very rarely publishes anything.

Is this the catastrophe of the story? Yes, for those that can understand, but not for people who must have everything told.

The Imaginary Mistress

Dedicated to the Comtesse Clara Maffei

In the month of September 1835, one of the richest heiresses of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, Mlle. du Rouvre, the only child of the Marquis du Rouvre, married Count Adam Mitgislas Laginski, a young Polish exile.

I allow myself to spell the names as they are pronounced, to spare the reader the sight of the fortifications of consonants by which, in the Slav languages, the vowels are protected, no doubt to secure them against loss, seeing how few they are.

The Marquis du Rouvre had dissipated almost the whole of one of the finest fortunes of the nobility, to which he had formerly owed his alliance with a Mlle. de Ronquerolles. Hence Clémentine had for her uncle, on her mother's side, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, and for her aunt Mme. de Sérizy. On her father's side she possessed another uncle in the eccentric person of the Chevalier du Rouvre, the younger son of the house, an old bachelor who had grown rich by speculations in land and houses.

The Marquis de Ronquerolles was so unhappy as to lose both his children during the visitation of cholera. Mme. de Sérizy's only son, a young officer of the highest promise, was killed in Africa at the fight by the Macta. In these days rich families run the risk of ruining their children if they have too many, or of becoming extinct if they have but one or two, a singular result of the Civil Code not foreseen by Napoleon. Thus, by accident, and in spite of M. du Rouvre's reckless extravagances for Florine, one of the most charming of Paris actresses, Clémentine had become an heiress. The Marquis de Ronquerolles, one of the most accomplished diplomats of the new dynasty, his sister, Mme. de Sérizy, and the Chevalier du Rouvre agreed that, to rescue their fortunes from the Marquis's clutches, they would leave them to their niece, to whom they each promised ten thousand francs a year on her marriage.

It is quite unneccessary to say that the Pole, though a refugee, cost the French Government absolutely nothing. Count Adam belonged to one of the oldest and most illustrious families of Poland, connected with most of the princely houses of Germany, with the Sapiéhas, the Radziwills, the Mniszechs, the Rzewuskis, the Czartoryskis, the Leszinskis, the Lubomirskis, in short all

the great Sarmatian *skis*. But a knowledge of heraldry is not a strong point in France under Louis Philippe, and such nobility could be no recommendation to the bourgeoise then in power. Besides, when, in 1833, Adam made his appearance on the Boulevard des Italiens, at Frascati's, at the Jockey Club, he led the life of a man who, having lost his principal prospects, falls back on his vices and his love of pleasure. He was taken for a student.

The Polish nationality, as the result of an odious Government reaction, had fallen as low as the Republicans had tried to think it high. The strange struggle of Movement against Resistance —two words which thirty years hence will be inexplicable—made a farce of what ought to have been so worthy: the name, that is, of a vanquished nation to which France gave hospitality, for which entertainments were devised, for which everyone danced or sang by subscription; a nation, in short, which at the time when, in 1796, Europe was fighting France, had offered her six thousand men, and such men!

Do not conclude from this that I mean to represent the Emperor Nicholas as being in the wrong as regards Poland, or Poland as regards the Emperor Nicholas. In the first place, it would be a silly thing enough to slip a political discussion into a tale which ought to interest or to amuse. Besides, Russia and Poland were equally right: one for aiming at unity of Empire, the other for desiring to be free again. It may be said, in passing, that Poland might have conquered Russia by the influence of manners instead of beating her with weapons; thus imitating the Chinese, who at last Chinesified the Tartars, and who, it is to be hoped, will do the same by the English. Poland ought to have *polished* the Russians; Poniatowski had tried it in the least temperate district of the Empire. But that gentleman was a misunderstood king—all the more so because he did not perhaps understand himself.

How was it possible not to hate the poor people who were the cause of the horrible deceit committed on the occasion of the review when all Paris was eager to rescue Poland? People affected to regard the Poles as allies of the Republican party, forgetting that Poland was an aristocratic republic. Thenceforth the party of wealth poured ignoble contempt on the Pole, who had been deified but a few days since. The wind of a riot has always blown the Parisians round from north to south under every form of government. This weathercock temper of Paris opinion must be remembered if we would understand how, in 1835, the name of Pole was a word of ridicule among the race who believe themselves to be the wittiest and politest in the world, and its central luminary, in a city which, at this day, wields the scepter of art and literature.

There are, alas! two types of Polish refugees—the republican Pole, the son of Lelewel, and the noble Pole, of the party led by Prince Czartoryski. These two kinds of Pole are as fire and water, but why blame them? Are not such divisions always to be observed among refugees whatever nation they belong to, and no matter what country they go to? They carry their country and their hatreds with them. At Brussels two French émigrés priests expressed

the greatest aversion for each other; and when one of them was asked his reasons, he replied, pointing to his companion in misery, "He is a Jansenist!" Dante, in his exile, would gladly have stabbed any adversary of the *Bianchi.* In this lies the reason of the attacks made on the venerable Prince Adam Czartoryski by the French radicals, and that of the disapproval shown to a section of the Polish emigrants by the Cæsars of the counter and the Alexanders by letters patent.

In 1834, Adam Mitgislas Laginski was the butt of Parisian witticisms.—"He is a nice fellow though he is a Pole," said Rastignac.—"All the Poles are great lords," said Maxime de Trailles, "but this one pays his gambling debts; I begin to think that he must have had an estate."

And without offense to the exiles, it may be remarked that the levity, the recklessness, the fluidity of the Sarmatian character justified the calumnies of the Parisians, who, indeed, in similar circumstances, would be exactly like the Poles. The French aristocracy, so admirably supported by the Polish aristocracy during the Revolution, certainly made no equivalent return to those who were forced to emigrate in 1832. We must have the melancholy courage to say that, in this, the Faubourg Saint-Germain remains Poland's debtor.

Was Count Adam rich, was he poor, was he an adventurer? The problem long remained unsolved. Diplomatic circles, faithful to their instructions, imitated the silence observed by the Emperor Nicholas, who at that time counted every Polish émigré as dead. The Tuileries, and most of those who took their cue from thence, gave an odious proof of this characteristic policy dignified by the name of prudence. A Russian prince, with whom they had smoked many cigars at the time of the emigration, was ignored because, as it seemed, he had fallen into disgrace with the Emperor Nicholas.

Thus placed between the prudence of the Court and that of diplomatic circles, Poles of good family lived in the Biblical solitude of *Super flumina Babylonis,* or frequented certain drawing-rooms which served as neutral territory for every variety of opinion. In a city of pleasure like Paris, where amusement is to be had in every rank, Polish recklessness found twice as many pretexts as it needed for leading a dissipated bachelor life. Besides, it must be said, Adam had against him at first both his appearance and his manners.

There are two types of Pole, as there are two types of Englishwoman. When an Englishwoman is not a beauty, she is horribly ugly—and Count Adam belongs to the second category. His face is small, somewhat sour, and looks as if it had been squeezed in a vice. His short nose, fair hair, red mustache and beard give him the expression of a goat; all the more so because he is short and thin, and his eyes, tinged with dingy yellow, startle you by the oblique leer which Virgil's line has made famous. How is it that, in spite of such unfavorable conditions, he has such exquisite manners and style? The solution of this mystery is given by his dress, that of a finished dandy, and by the education he owes to his mother, a Radziwill. If his courage carries him to the point of rashness, his mind is not above the current and trivial pleas-

antries of Paris conversation; still, he does not often find a young fellow who is his superior among men of fashion. These young men nowadays talk far too much of horses, income taxes, and deputies, for French conversation to be what it once was. Wit needs leisure, and certain inequalities of position. Conversation is better perhaps at Petersburg and at Vienna than it is in Paris. Equals need no subtleties; they tell each other everything straight out, just as it is. Hence the ironical laughers of Paris could scarcely discern a man of family in a light-hearted student, as he seemed, who in talking passed carelessly from one subject to another, who pursued amusement with all the more frenzy because he had just escaped from great perils, and who, having left the country where his family was known, thought himself at liberty to lead an irresponsible life without risking a loss of consideration.

One fine day in 1834, Adam bought a large house in the Rue de la Pépinière. Six months later it was on as handsome a footing as the richest houses in Paris. Just at the time when Laginski was beginning to be taken seriously, he saw Clémentine at the Italian opera, and fell in love with her. A year later he married her. Mme. d'Espard's circle set the fashion of approval. Mothers of families then learned, too late, that ever since the year 900 the Laginskis had ranked with the most illustrious families of the North. By a stroke of prudence, most unlike a Pole, the young Count's mother had, at the beginning of the rebellion, mortgaged her estates for an immense sum advanced by two Jewish houses, and invested in the French funds. Count Adam Laginski had an income of more than eighty thousand francs. This put an end to the astonishment expressed in some drawing-rooms at the rashness of Mme. de Sérizy, of old de Ronquerolles, and of the Chevalier du Rouvre in yielding to their niece's mad passion.

As usual, the world rushed from one extreme to the other. During the winter of 1836, Count Adam became the fashion, and Clémentine Laginski one of the queens of Paris. Mme. de Laginski, at the present time, is one of the charming group of young married women among whom shines Mmes. de Lestorade, de Portenduère, Marie de Vandenesse, du Guénic, and de Maufrigneuse, the very flower of Paris society, who live high above the pervenus, bourgeois, and wirepullers of recent politics.

This preamble was needful to define the sphere in which was carried through one of those sublime efforts less rare than the detractors of the present time imagine,—pearls hidden in rough shells, and lost in the depths of that abyss, that ocean, that never-resting tide called the World—the Age—Paris, London, or Petersburg—whichever you will.

If ever the truth that architecture is the expression of the manners of a race was fully demonstrated, is it not since the revolution of 1830, under the reign of the House of Orleans? Great fortunes have shrunk in France, and the majestic mansions of our fathers are constantly being demolished and replaced by a sort of tenement houses, in which a peer of France of July dwells on the third floor, over some newly-enriched empiric. Styles are mingled in confusion. As there is no longer any

Court, any nobility to set a "tone," no harmony is to be seen in the productions of art. On the other hand, architecture has never found more economical tricks for imitating what is genuine and thorough, never displayed more ingenuity and resource in arrangement. Ask an artist to deal with a strip of the garden of an old "hôtel" now destroyed, and he will build you a little Louvre crushed under its ornamentation; he will give you a courtyard, stables, and, if you insist, a garden; inside he contrives such a number of little rooms and corridors, and cheats the eye so effectually, that you fancy yourself comfortable; in fact, there are so many bedrooms that a ducal retinue can live and move in what was only the bake-house of a president of a law court.

The Comtesse Laginski's house is one of these modern structures, with a courtyard in front and a garden behind. To the right of the courtyard are the servants' quarters, balanced on the left by the stables and coach-houses. The porter's lodge stands between two handsome gates. The chief luxury of this house consists in a delightful conservatory at the end of a boudoir on the ground floor, where all the beautiful reception-rooms are. It was a philanthropist driven out of England who built this architectural gem, constructed the conservatory, planned the garden, varnished the door, paved the outbuildings with brick, filled the windows with green glass, and realized a vision like that—in due proportion—of George IV. at Brighton. The inventive, industrious, and ready Paris artisan had carved his doors and window frames; his ceilings were imitated from those of the Middle Ages or of Venetian palaces, and there was a lavish outlay of marble slabs in external paneling. Steinbock and François Souchet had carved the cornices of the doors and chimney shelves; Schinner had painted the ceilings with the brush of a master. The wonders of the stairs—marble as white as a woman's arm—defied those of the Hôtel Rotschild.

In consequence of the disturbances, the price of this folly was not more than eleven hundred thousand francs. For an Englishman this was giving it away. All this splendor, called princely by people who do not know what a real prince is, stood in the garden of a contractor—a Crœsus of the Revolution, who had died at Brussels a bankrupt after a sudden convulsion of the Bourse. The Englishman died at Paris—died of Paris—for to many people Paris is a disease; sometimes it is several diseases. His widow, a Methodist, had a perfect horror of the nabob's little house—this philanthropist had been a dealer in opium. The virtuous widow ordered that the scandalous property should be sold just at the time when the disturbances made peace doubtful on any terms. Count Adam took advantage of the opportunity; and you shall be told how it happened, for nothing could be less consonant with his lordly habits.

Behind this house, built of stone fretted like a melon, spreads the green velvet of an English lawn, shaded at the further end by an elegant clump of exotic trees, among which rises a Chinese pavilion with its mute bells and pendent gilt eggs. The greenhouse and its fantastic decorations screen the

outer wall on the south side. The other wall, opposite the greenhouse, is hung with creepers grown in arcades over poles and cross-beams painted green. This meadow, this realm of flowers, these graveled paths, this mimic forest, these aërial trellises cover an area of about twenty-five square perches, of which the present value would be four hundred thousand francs, as much as a real forest. In the heart of this silence won from Paris, birds sing; there are blackbirds, nightingales, bullfinches, chaffinches, and numbers of sparrows. The conservatory is a vast flowerbed, where the air is loaded with perfume, and where you may walk in winter as though summer was blazing with all its fires. The means by which an atmosphere is produced at will of the tropics, China or Italy, are ingeniously concealed from view. The pipes in which the boiling water circulates—the steam, hot air, what not—are covered with soil, and look like garlands of growing flowers.

The boudoir is spacious. On a small plot of ground the miracle wrought by the Paris fairy called Architecture is to produce everything on a large scale. The young Countess's boudoir was the pride of the artist to whom Count Adam intrusted the task of redecorating the house. To sin there would be impossible, there are too many pretty trifles. Love would not know where to alight amid work-tables of Chinese carving, where the eye can find thousands of droll little figures wrought in the ivory—the outcome of the toil of two families of Chinese artists; vases of burnt topaz mounted on filigree stands; mosaics that invite to theft; Dutch pictures, such as Schinner now paints again; angels imagined as Steinbock conceives of them (but does not always work them out himself); statuettes executed by geniuses pursued by creditors (the true interpretation of the Arab myths); sublime first sketches by our greatest artists; fronts of carved chests let into the wainscot, and alternating with the inventions of Indian embroidery; gold-colored curtains draped over the doors from an architrave of black oak wrought with the swarming figures of a hunting scene; chairs and tables worthy of Mme. de Pompadour; a Persian carpet, and so forth. And finally, as a crowning touch, all this splendor, seen under a softened light filtering in through lace curtains, looks all the more beautiful. On a marble slab, among some antiques, a lady's whip, with a handle carved by Mlle. de Fauveau, shows that the Countess is fond of riding.

Such is a boudoir in 1837, a display of property to divert the eye, as though ennui threatened to invade the most restless and unresting society in the world. Why is there nothing individual, intimate, nothing to invite reverie and repose?—Why?—Because no one is sure of the morrow, and everyone enjoys life as a prodigal spends a life-interest.

One morning Clémentine affected a meditative air, as she lounged on one of those deep siesta chairs from which we cannot bear to rise, so cleverly has the upholsterer who invented them contrived to fit them to the curves of laziness and the comfort of the *Dolce far niente*. The doors to the conservatory were open, admitting the scent of vegetation and the perfumes of the tropics.

The young wife watched Adam, who was smoking an elegant narghileh, the only form of pipe she allowed in this room. Over the other door, curtains, caught back by handsome ropes, showed two magnificent rooms beyond: one in white and gold, resembling that of the Hôtel Forbin-Janson; the other in the taste of the Renaissance. The dining-room, unrivaled in Paris by any but that of the Baron de Nucingen, is at the end of a corridor, with a ceiling and walls decorated in a medieval style. This corridor is reached, on the courtyard front, through a large anteroom, through whose glass door the splendor of the stairs is seen.

The Count and Countess had just breakfasted; the sky was a sheet of blue without a cloud; the month of April was drawing to a close. The household had already known two years of happiness, and now, only two days since, Clémentine had discovered in her home something resembling a secret, a mystery. A Pole, let it be repeated to his honor, is generally weak in the presence of a woman; he is so full of tenderness that, in Poland, he becomes her inferior; and though Polish women are admirable creatures, a Pole is even more quickly routed by a Parisienne. Hence, Count Adam, pressed hard with questions, had not enough artless cunning to sell his secret dear to his wife. With a woman there is always something to be got for a secret; and she likes you the better for it, as a rogue respects an honest man whom he has failed to take in. The Count, more ready with his sword than with his tongue, only stipulated that he should not be required to answer till he had finished his narghileh full of *tombaki*.

"When we were traveling," said she, "you replied to every difficulty by saying, 'Paz will see to that!' You never wrote to anybody but Paz. On my return, everyone refers me to *the Captain*. I want to go out.—The Captain! Is there a bill to be paid?—The Captain. If my horse's pace is rough, they will speak to Captain Paz. In short, here I feel as if it were a game of dominoes; everywhere Paz! I hear no one talked of but Paz, but I can never see Paz. What is Paz? Let our Paz be brought to see me."

"Then is not everything as it ought to be?" said the Count, relinquishing the mouthpiece of his narghileh.

"Everything is so quite what it ought to be that if we had two hundred thousand francs a year we should be ruined by living in the way we do with a hundred and ten thousand," said she. She pulled the bell-handle embroidered in tentstitch, a marvel of skill. A manservant dressed like a minister at once appeared.

"Tell M. le Capitaine Paz that I wish to speak to him," said she.

"If you fancy you will find anything out in that way——," said Count Adam with a smile.

It may be useful to say that Adam and Clémentine, married in December 1835, after spending the winter in Paris, had during 1836 traveled in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. They returned home in November, and during the winter just past the Countess had for the first time received her friends, and then had discovered the existence—the almost speechless and unacknowl-

edged, but most useful present—of a factotum whose person seemed to be invisible—this Captain Paz or Pac.

"M. le Capitaine Paz begs Mme. la Comtesse to excuse him; he is round at the stables, and in a dress which does not allow of his coming at this minute. But as soon as he is dressed Count Paz will come," said the man-servant.

"Why, what was he doing?"

"He was showing Constantine how to groom the Countess's horse; the man did not do it to his mind," replied the servant.

The Countess looked at the man; he was quite serious, and took good care not to imply by a smile the comment which inferiors so often allow themselves on a superior who seems to have descended to their level.

"Ah, he was brushing down Cora?"

"You are not riding out this morning, madame?" said the servant; but he got no answer, and went.

"Is he a Pole?" asked Clémentine of her husband, who bowed affirmatively.

Clémentine lay silent, examining Adam. Her feet, almost at full length on a cushion, her head in the attitude of a bird listening on the edge of its nest to the sounds of the grove, she would have seemed charming to the most *blasé* of men. Fair and slight, her hair curled *à l'Anglaise,* she looked like one of the almost fabulous figures in *Keepsakes,* especially as she was wrapped in a morning gown of Persian silk, of which the thick folds did not so effectually disguise the graces of her figure and the slenderness of her waist, as that they could not be admired through the thick covering of flowers and embroidery. As she crossed the brightly colored stuff over her chest, the hollow of her throat remained visible, the white skin contrasting in tone with the handsome lace trimming over the shoulders. Her eyes, fringed with black lashes, emphasized the expression of curiosity that puckered a pretty mouth. On her well-formed brow were traced the characteristic curves of the Paris woman, willful, light-hearted, well educated, but invulnerable to vulgar temptations. Her hands, almost transparent, hung from each arm of her deep chair; the taper fingers, curved at the tips, showed nails like pink almonds that caught the light.

Adam smiled at his wife's impatience, gazing at her with a look which conjugal satiety had not yet made lukewarm. This slim little Countess had known how to be mistress in her own house, for she scarcely acknowledged Adam's admiration. In the glances she stole at him there was perhaps a dawning consciousness of the superiority of a Parisienne to this spruce, lean, and red-haired Pole.

"Here comes Paz," said the Count, hearing a step that rang in the corridor.

The Countess saw a tall, handsome man come in, well built, bearing in his features the marks of the grief which comes of strength and misfortune. Paz had dressed hastily in one of those tightly fitting coats, fastened by braid straps and oval buttons, which used to be called *polonaises.* Thick, black hair, but ill-kempt, covered his squarely shaped head, and Clémentine could see his broad forehead as shiny as a piece of marble, for he held his peaked cap in his hand. That hand was like the hand of the Hercules carrying the infant

Mercury. Robust health bloomed in a face equally divided by a large Roman nose, which reminded Clémentine of the handsome Trasteverini. A black silk stock put a finishing touch of martial appearance to this mystery of near six feet high, with jet-black eyes as lustrous as an Italian's. The width of his full boots, showed that Paz still was faithful to the fashions of Poland. Certainly, to a romantic woman, there must have been something burlesque in the violent contrast observable between the Captain and the Count, between the little Pole with his narrow frame and this fine soldier, between the carpet-knight and the knight servitor.

"Good-morning, Adam," he said to the Count with familiarity.

Then he bowed gracefully, asking Clémentine in what way he could serve her.

"Then you are Laginski's friend?" asked the lady.

"For life and death," replied Paz, on whom the young Count shed his most affectionate smile, as he exhaled his last fragrant puff of smoke.

"Well, then, why do you not eat with us? Why did you not accompany us to Italy and to Switzerland? Why do you hide yourself so as to avoid the thanks I owe you for the constant services you do us?" said the young Countess, with a sort of irritation, but without the slightest feeling.

In fact, she detected a kind of volunteer slavery on the part of Paz. At that time such an idea was inseparable from a certain disdain for a socially amphibious creature, a being at once secretary and bailiff, neither wholly bailiff nor wholly secretary, some poor relation—inconvenient as a friend.

"The fact is, Countess," he replied with some freedom, "that no thanks are owing to me. I am Adam's friend, and I find my pleasure in taking charge of his interests."

"And is it for your pleasure too that you remain standing?" said Count Adam.

Paz sat down in an armchair near the doorway.

"I remember having seen you on the occasion of our marriage, and sometimes in the courtyard," said the lady; "but why do you, a friend of Adam's, place yourself in a position of inferiority?"

"The opinion of the Paris world is to me a matter of indifference," said he. "I live for myself, or, if you choose, for you two."

"But the opinion of the world as regards my husband's friend cannot be a matter of indifference to me——"

"Oh, madame, the world is easily satisfied by one word: Eccentric—say that."

After a short pause he asked, "Do you propose going out?"

"Will you come to the Bois?" said the Countess.

"With pleasure," and so saying Paz bowed and went out.

"What a good soul! He is as simple as a child," said Adam.

"Tell me how you became friends," said Clémentine.

"Paz, my dearest, is of a family as old, as noble, and as illustrious as our own. At the time of the fall of the Pazzi a member of that family escaped from Florence into Poland, where he settled with some little fortune, and

founded the family of the Paz, on which the title of Count was conferred.

"This family, having distinguished itself in the days of our royal republic, grew rich. The cutting from the tree felled in Italy grew with such vigor that there are several branches of the house of the Counts Paz. It will not, therefore, surprise you to be told that there are rich and poor members of the family. Our Paz is the son of a poor branch. As an orphan, with no fortune but his sword, he served under the Grand Duke Constantine at the time of our Revolution. Carried away by the Polish party, he fought like a Pole, like a patriot, like a man who has nothing—three reasons for fighting well. In the last skirmish, believing his men were following him, he rushed on a Russian battery, and was taken prisoner. I was there. This feat of courage roused my blood. 'Let us go and fetch him!' cried I to my horsemen. We charged the battery like freebooters, and I rescued Paz, I being the seventh. We were twenty when we set out, and eight when we came back, including Paz.

"When Warsaw was betrayed we had to think of escaping from the Russians. By a singular chance Paz and I found ourselves together at the same hour and in the same place on the other side of the Vistula. I saw the poor Captain arrested by some Prussians, who at that time had made themselves bloodhounds for the Russians. When one has fished a man out of the Styx, one gets attached to him. This new danger threatening Paz distressed me so much that I allowed myself to be taken with him, intending to be of service to him. Two men can sometimes escape when one alone is lost. Thanks to my name and some family connection with those on whom our fate depended—for we were then in the power of the Prussians—my fight was winked at. I got my dear Captain through as a common soldier and a servant of my house, and we succeeded in reaching Dantzic. We stowed ourselves in a Dutch vessel sailing for England, where we landed two months later.

"My mother had fallen ill in England, and awaited me there; Paz and I nursed her till her death, which was accelerated by the disasters to our cause.

"We then left Englnd, and I brought Paz to France; in such adversities two men become brothers. When I found myself in Paris with sixty-odd thousand francs a year, not to mention the remains of a sum derived from the sale of my mother's diamonds and the family pictures, I wished to secure a living to Paz before giving myself up to the dissipations of Paris life. I had discerned some sadness in the Captain's eyes, sometimes even a suppressed tear floated there. I had had opportunities of appreciating his soul, which is thoroughly noble, lofty, and generous. Perhaps it was painful to him to find himself bound by benefits to a man six years younger than himself without being able to repay him. I, careless and light-hearted as a boy, might ruin myself at play, or let myself be ensnared by some woman; Paz and I might some day be sundered. Though I promised myself that I would always provide for all his needs, I foresaw many chances of forgetting, or being unable to pay Paz an allowance. In short, my angel, I wished to spare him the discomfort,

the humiliation, the shame of having to ask me for money, or of seeking in vain for his comrade in some day of necessity. *Dunque,* one morning after breakfast, with our feet on the fire-dogs, each smoking his pipe, after many blushes, and with many precautions, till I saw he was looking at me quite anxiously, I held out to him a bond to bearer producing two thousand four hundred francs interest yearly——"

Clémentine rose, seated herself on Adam's knees, and putting her arm round his neck, kissed him on the brow, saying:

"Dear heart, how noble I think you! And what did Paz say?"

"Thaddeus?" said the Count. "He turned pale and said nothing."

"Thaddeus—is that his name?"

"Yes.—Thaddeus folded up the paper and returned it to me, saying, 'I thought, Adam, that we were as one in life and death, and that we should never part; do you wish to see no more of me?'—'Oh,' said I, 'is that the way you take it? Well, then, say no more about it. If I am ruined, you will be ruined.'—Said he, 'You are not rich enough to live as a Laginski should; and do you not need a friend to take care of your concerns, who will be father and brother to you, and a trusted confidant?' My dear girl, Paz, as he uttered the words, spoke with a calmness of tone and look which covered a motherly feeling, but which betrayed the gratitude of an Arab, the devotion of a dog, and the friendship of a savage, always ready and always unassuming. On my honor! I took him in our Polish fashion, laying my hand on his shoulder, and I kissed him on the lips. 'For life and death, then,' said I. 'All I have is yours, do just as you will.'

"It was he who found me this house for almost nothing. He sold my shares when they were high, and bought when they were low, and we purchased this hovel out of the difference. He is a connoisseur in horses, and deals in them so well that my stable has cost me very little, and yet I have the finest beasts and the prettiest turn-out in Paris. Our servants, old Polish soldiers whom he found, would pass through the fire for us. While I seem to be ruining myself, Paz keeps my house with such perfect order and economy that he has even made good some losses at play, the follies of a young man. My Thaddeus is as cunning as two Genoese, as keen for profit as a Polish Jew, as cautious as a good housekeeper. I have never been able to persuade him to live as I did when I was a bachelor. Sometimes it has needed the gentle violence of friendship to induce him to come to the play when I was going alone, or to one of the dinners I was giving at an eating-house to a party of congenial companions. He does not like the life of drawing-rooms."

"Then what does he like?" asked Clémentine.

"He loves Poland, and weeps over her. His only extravagance has been money sent, more in my name than in his own, to some of our poor exiles."

"Dear, how fond I shall be of that good fellow," said the Countess. "He seems to me as simple as everything that is truly great."

"All the pretty things you see here," said Adam, praising his friend, with the most generous security, "have been found

by Paz; he has bought them at sales, or by some chance. Oh! he is keener at a bargain than a trader. If you see him rubbing his hands in the courtyard, it is because he has exchanged a good horse for a better. He lives in me; his delight is to see me well dressed in a dazzlingly smart carriage. He performs all the duties he imposes on himself without fuss or display. One night I had lost twenty thousand francs at whist. 'What will Paz say?' thought I to myself as I reached home. Paz gave me the sum, not without a sigh; but he did not blame me even by a look. This sigh checked me more than all the remonstrances of uncles, wives, or mothers in similar circumstances. 'You regret the money?' I asked him.—'Oh, not for you, nor for myself; no, I was only thinking that twenty poor relations of mine could have lived on it for a year.'

"The family of Paz, you understand, is quite equal to that of Laginski, and I have never regarded my dear Paz as an inferior. I have tried to be as magnanimous in my degree as he in his. I never go out or come in without going to Paz, as if he were my father. My fortune is his. In short, Thaddeus knows that at this day I would rush into danger to rescue him, as I have done twice before."

"That is not a small thing to say, my dear," remarked the Countess. "Devotion is a lightning-flash. Men devote themselves in war, but they no longer devote themselves in Paris."

"Well, then," said Adam, "for Paz I am always in war. Our two natures have preserved their asperities and their faults, but the mutual intimacy of our souls has tightened the bonds, already so close, of our friendship. A man may save his comrade's life, and kill him afterwards if he finds him a bad companion; but we have gone through what makes friendship indissoluble. There is between us that constant exchange of pleasing impressions on both sides which makes friendship, from that point of view, a richer joy, perhaps, than love."

A pretty little hand shut the Count's mouth so suddenly that the movement was almost a blow.

"Yes, indeed, my darling," said he. "Friendship knows nothing of the bankruptcy of sentiment, the insolvency of pleasures. Love, after giving more than it has, ends by giving less than it receives?"

"On both sides alike then," said Clémentine, smiling.

"Yes," said Adam. "While friendship can but increase. You need not pout. We, my angel, are as much friends as lovers; we, at least, I hope, have combined the two feelings in our happy marriage."

"I will explain to you what has made you two such good friends," said Clémentine. "The difference in your lives arises from a difference in your tastes, and not from compulsory choice; from preference, and not from the necessity of position. So far as a man can be judged from a glimpse, and from what you tell me, in this instance the subaltern may at times be the superior."

"Oh! Paz is really my superior," replied Adam simply. "I have no advantage over him but that of luck."

His wife kissed him for this generous avowal.

"The perfect skill with which he conceals the loftiness of his soul is an im-

mense superiority," the Count went on. "I say to him, 'You are a fly fellow; you have vast domains in your mind to which you retire.' He has a right to the title of Count Paz; in Paris he will only be called Captain."

"In short, a Florentine of the Middle Ages has resuscitated after three centuries," said the Countess. "There is something of Dante in him, and something of Michael Angelo."

"Indeed, you are right; he is at heart a poet," replied Adam.

"And so I am married to two Poles," said the young Countess, with a gesture resembling that of a genius on the stage.

"Darling child!" said Adam, clasping Clémentine to him, "you would have distressed me very much if you had not liked my friend. We were both afraid of that, though he was delighted at my marrying. You will make him very happy by telling him that you love him —oh! as an old friend."

"Then I will go to dress; it is fine, we will all three go out," said Clémentine, ringing for her maid.

Paz led such an underground life that all the fashion of Paris wondered who it was that accompanied Clémentine Laginski when they saw her driving to the Bois and back between him and her husband. During the drive Clémentine had insisted that Thaddeus was to dine with her. This whim of a despotic sovereign compelled the Captain to make an unwonted toilet. On returning from her drive Clémentine dressed with some coquettish care, in such a way as to produce an effect even on Adam as she entered the room where the two friends were awaiting her.

"Count Paz," said she, "we will go to the opera together."

It was said in the tone which from a woman conveys, "If you refuse, we shall quarrel."

"With pleasure, madame," replied the Captain. "But as I have not a Count's fortune, call me Captain."

"Well, then, Captain, give me your arm," said she, taking it and leading him into the dining-room with a suggestion of the caressing familiarity which enraptures a lover.

The Countess placed the Captain next her, and he sat like a poor sub-lieutenant dining with a wealthy general. Paz left it to Clémentine to talk, listening to her with all the air of deference to a superior, contradicting her in nothing, and waiting for a positive question before making any reply. In short, to the Countess he seemed almost stupid, and her graces all fell flat before this icy gravity and diplomatic dignity. In vain did Adam try to rouse him by saying: "Come, cheer up, Captain. It might be supposed that you were not at home. You must have laid a bet that you would disconcert Clémentine?" Thaddeus remained heavy and half-asleep.

When the three were alone at dessert the Captain explained that his life was planned diametrically unlike that of other people; he went to bed at eight o'clock, and rose at daybreak; and he thus excused himself, saying he was very sleepy.

"My intention in taking you to the opera was only to amuse you, Captain; but do just as you please," said Clémentine, a little nettled.

"I will go," said Paz.

"Duprez is singing in *William Tell*,"

said Adam. "Would you prefer the *Variétés?*"

The Captain smiled and rang the bell; the man-servant appeared. "Tell Constantine," said Paz, "to take out the large carriage instead of the coupé.—We cannot sit comfortably in it," he added, turning to the Count.

"A Frenchman would not have thought of that," said Clémentine, smiling.

"Ah, but we are Florentines transplanted to the North!" replied Thaddeus, with a meaning and an expression which showed that his dullness at dinner had been assumed.

But by a very conceivable want of judgment, there was too great a contrast between the involuntary self-betrayal of this speech and the Captain's attitude during dinner. Clémentine examined him with one of those keen flashes by which a woman reveals at once her surprise and her observancy. Thus, during the few minutes while they were taking their coffee in the drawing-room, silence reigned—an uncomfortable silence for Adam, who could not divine its cause. Clémentine no longer disturbed Thaddeus. The Captain, for his part, retired again into military rigidity, and came out of it no more, either on the way, or in the box, where he affected to be asleep.

"You see, madame, that I am very dull company," said he, during the ballet in the last act of *William Tell*. "Was I not right to 'stick to my last,' as the proverb says?"

"On my word, my dear Captain, you are neither a coxcomb nor a chatterbox; you are perhaps a Pole."

"Leave me then to watch over your pleasures," he replied, "to take care of your fortune and your house; that is all I am good for."

"Tartufe! begone!" cried Adam, smiling. "My dear, he is full of heart, well informed—he could, if he chose, hold his own in any drawing-room. Clémentine, do not believe what his modesty tells you."

"Good-night, Countess. I have proved my willingness, and now will avail myself of your carriage to go to bed at once. I will send it back for you."

Clémentine bowed slightly, and let him go without replying.

"What a bear!" said she to the Count. "You are much, much nicer."

Adam pressed his wife's hand unseen.

"Poor, dear Thaddeus, he has endeavored to be a foil when many men would have tried to seem more attractive than I."

"Oh!" said she, "I am not sure that was not intentional; his behavior would have mystified an ordinary woman."

Half an hour later, while Boleslas, the groom, was calling "Gate," and the coachman, having turned the carriage to drive in, was waiting for the gates to be opened, Clémentine said to the Count:

"Where does the Captain roost?"

"Up there," said Adam, pointing to an elegantly constructed attic extending on both sides of the gateway with a window looking on to the street. "His rooms are over the coach-houses."

"And who lives in the other half?"

"No one as yet," replied Adam. "The other little suite, over the stables, will do for our children and their tutor."

"He is not in bed," said the Countess, seeing a light in the Captain's room when the carriage was under the pillared portico—copied from that at the Tui-

teries, and taking the place of the ordinary zinc awning painted to imitate striped ticking.

Paz, in his dressing-gown, and pipe in hand, was watching Clémentine as she disappeared into the hall. The day had been a cruel one to him. And this is the reason: Thaddeus had felt a fearful shock to his heart on the day when, Adam having taken him to the opera to pronounce his opinion, he first saw Mlle. du Rouvre; and again, when he saw her in the Maire's office and at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, and recognized in her the woman whom a man must love to the exclusion of all others—for Don Juan himself preferred one among the *mille e tre!*

Hence Paz had strongly advocated the classical bridal tour after the wedding. Fairly easy all the time while Clémentine was absent, his tortures began again on the return of the happy couple. And this was what he was thinking as he inhaled his latakia from a cherry-stem pipe, six feet long, a gift from Adam: "Only I and God, who will reward me for suffering in silence, may ever know how I love her! But how can I manage to avoid alike her love or her hatred?"

And he sat thinking, thinking, over this problem of the strategy of love.

It must not be supposed that Thaddeus lived bereft of all joy in the midst of his pain. The triumphant cunning of this day was a source of secret satisfaction. Since the Count's return with his wife, day by day he felt ineffable happiness in seeing that he was necessary to the couple, who, but for him, would have rushed inevitably into ruin. What fortune can hold out against the extravagance of Paris life? Clémentine, brought up by a reckless father, knew nothing of household management, which nowadays the richest women and the highest in rank are obliged to undertake themselves. Who in these days can afford to keep a steward? Adam, on his part, as the son of one of the great Polish nobles who allowed themselves to be devoured by the Jews, and who was incapable of husbanding the remains of one of the most enormous fortunes in Poland—where fortunes were enormous—was not of a temper to restrict either his own fancies or his wife's. If he had been alone he would probably have ruined himself before his marriage. Paz had kept him from gambling on the Bourse, and does not that say all?

Consequently, when he found that, in spite of himself, he was in love with Clémentine, Paz had not the choice of leaving the house and traveling to forget his passion. Gratitude, the clew to the mystery of his life, held him to the house where he alone could act as man of business to this heedless couple. Their long absence made him hope for a calmer spirit; but the Countess came back more than ever lovely, having acquired that freedom of thought which marriage confers on the Paris woman, and displaying all the charms of a young wife, with the indefinable something which comes of happiness, or of the independence allowed her by a man as trusting, as chivalrous, and as much in love as Adam was.

The consciousness of being the working hub of this magnificent house, the sight of Clémentine stepping out of her carriage on her return from a party, or setting out in the morning for the Bois de Boulogne, a glimpse of her on the

boulevards in her pretty carriage, like a flower in its nest of leaves, filled poor Thaddeus with deep, mysterious ecstasies which blossomed at the bottom of his heart without the slightest trace appearing in his features. How, during these five months, should the Countess ever have seen the Captain? He hid from her, concealing the care he took to keep out of her way.

Nothing is so near divine love as a hopeless love. Must not a man have some depth of soul thus to devote himself in silence and obscurity? This depth, where lurks the pride of a father —or of God—enshrines the worship of love for love's sake, as power for power's sake was the watchword of the Jesuits; a sublime kind of avarice, since it is perennially generous, and modeled indeed on the mysterious Being of the first principles of the world. Is not their result Nature? And Nature is an enchantress; she belongs to man, to the poet, the painter, the lover; but is not the Cause superior to Nature in the sight of certain privileged souls, and some stupendous thinkers? The Cause is God. In that sphere of Causes dwelt the spirits of Newton, of Laplace, of Kepler, of Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Buffon, of the true poets and saints of the second century of our era, of Saint Theresa of Spain and the sublime mystics. Every human emotion contains some analogy with the frame of mind in which the Effect is neglected in favor of the Cause, and Thaddeus has risen to the height whence all things look different. Abandoned to the unspeakable joys of creative energy, Thaddeus was, in love, what we recognize as greatest in the records of genius.

"No, she is not altogether deceived," thought he, as he watched the smoke curl from his pipe. "She might involve me in an irremediable quarrel with Adam if she spited me; and if she could flirt to torment me, what would become of me?"

The fatuity of this hypothesis was so unlike the Captain's modest nature, and his somewhat German shyness, that he was vexed with himself for its having occurred to him, and went to bed determined to await events before taking any decisive steps.

Next morning Clémentine breakfasted very well without Thaddeus, and made no remark on his disobedience. That day, as it happened, was her day for being "at home," and this, with her, demanded a royal display. She did not observe the absence of Captain Paz, on whom devolved all the arrangements for these great occasions.

"Well and good!" said Paz to himself, as he heard the carriages rumble out at two in the morning; "the Countess was only prompted by a Parisian's whim or curiosity."

So the Captain fell back into his regular routine, disturbed for a day by this incident. Clémentine, diverted by the details of life in Paris, seemed to have forgotten Paz. For do you suppose that it is a mere trifle to reign over this inconstant city? Do you imagine, by any chance, that a woman risks nothing but her fortune at that absorbing game?

The winter is to a woman of fashion what, of yore, a campaign was to the soldiers of the Empire. What a work of art—of genius—is a costume or a head-dress created to make a sensation! A fragile, delicate woman wears her

hard and dazzling armor of flowers and diamonds, silk and steel, from nine in the evening till two or often three in the morning. She eats little, to attract the eye by her slender shape; she cheats the hunger that attacks her during the evening with debilitating cups of tea, sweet cakes, heating ices, or heavy slices of pastry. The stomach must submit to the commands of vanity. She awakes late, and thus everything is in contradiction to the laws of Nature, and Nature is ruthless.

No sooner is she up than the woman of fashion begins to dress for the morning, planning her dress for the afternoon. Must she not receive and pay visits, and go to the Bois on horseback or in her carriage? Must she not always be practicing the drill of smiles, and fatigue her brain in inventing compliments which shall seem neither stale nor studied? And it is not every woman who succeeds. And then you are surprised, when you see a young woman, whom the world has welcomed in her freshness, faded and blighted at the end of three years. Six months spent in the country are barely enough to heal the wounds inflicted by the winter. We hear nothing talked of but dyspepsia and strange maladies, unknown to women who devote themselves to their household. Formerly a woman was sometimes seen; now she is perpetually on the stage.

Clémentine had to fight her way; she was beginning to be quoted, and amid the cares of this struggle between her and her rivals there was hardly a place for love of her husband! Thaddeus might well be forgotten. However, a month later, in May, a few days before her departure to stay at Ronquerolles in Burgundy, as she was returning from her drive she saw Thaddeus in a side alley of the Champs-Élysées,—Thaddeus, carefully dressed, and in raptures at seeing his Countess so beautiful in her phaeton, with champing horses, splendid liveries; in short, the dear people he admired so much.

"There is the Captain," said she to Adam.

"Happy fellow!" said the Count. "These are his great treats! There is not a smarter turn-out than ours, and he delights in seeing everybody envying us our happiness. You have never noticed him before, but he is there almost every day."

"What can he be thinking of?" said Clémentine.

"He is thinking at this moment that the winter has cost a great deal, and that we shall save a little by staying with your old uncle Ronquerolles," said Adam.

The Countess had the carriage stopped in front of Paz, and desired him to take the seat by her side in the carriage. Thaddeus turned as red as a cherry.

"I shall poison you," he said; "I have just been smoking cigars."

"And does not Adam poison me?" she replied quickly.

"Yes, but he is Adam," replied the Captain.

"And why should not Thaddeus enjoy the same privilege?" said the Countess with a smile.

This heavenly smile had a power which was too much for his heroic resolutions; he gazed at Clémentine with all the fire of his soul in his eyes, but tempered by the angelic expression of

his gratitude—that of a man who lived solely by gratitude. The Countess folded her arms in her shawl, leaned back pensively against the cushions, crumpling the feathers of her handsome bonnet, and gazed out at the passers-by. This flash from a soul so noble, and hitherto so resigned, appealed to her feelings. What, after all, was Adam's great merit? Was it not natural that he should be brave and generous? But the Captain!—Thaddeus possessed, or seemed to possess, an immense superiority over Adam. What sinister thoughts distressed the Countess when she once more observed the contrast between the fine, complete physical nature which distinguished Thaddeus and the frail constitution which, in her husband, betrayed the inevitable degeneration of aristocratic families which are so mad as to persist in intermarrying! But the Devil alone knew these thoughts, for the young wife sat with vague meditation in her eyes, saying nothing till they reached home.

"You must dine with us, or I shall be angry with you for having disobeyed me," said she as she went in. "You are Thaddeus to me, as you are to Adam. I know the obligations you feel to him, but I also know all we owe to you. In return for two impulses of generosity which are so natural, you are generous at all hours and day after day.—My father is coming to dine with us, as well as my uncle Ronquerolles and my aunt de Sérizy; dress at once," she said, pressing the hand he offered to help her out of the carriage.

Thaddeus went to his room to dress, his heart at once rejoicing and oppressed by an agonizing flutter. He came down at the last moment, and all through dinner played his part of a soldier fit for nothing but to fulfill the duties of a steward. But this time Clémentine was not his dupe. His look had enlightened her. Ronquerolles, the cleverest of ambassadors next to Talleyrand, and who served de Marsay so well during his short ministry, was informed by his niece of the high merits of Count Paz, who had so modestly made himself his friend's steward.

"And how is it that this is the first time I have ever seen Count Paz?" asked the Marquis de Ronquerolles.

"Eh! he is very sly and underhand," replied Clémentine, with a look at Paz to desire him to change his demeanor.

Alas! it must be owned, at the risk of making the Captain less interesting to the reader, Paz, though superior to his friend Adam, was not a man of strong temper. He owed his apparent superiority to his misfortunes. In his days of poverty and isolation at Warsaw he had read and educated himself, had compared and thought much; but the creative power which makes a great man he did not possess—can it ever be acquired? Paz was great only through his feelings, and there could rise to the sublime; but in the sphere of sentiment, being a man of action rather than of ideas, he kept his thoughts to himself. His thoughts, then, did nothing but eat his heart out.

And what, after all, is an unuttered thought?

At Clémentine's speech the Marquis de Ronquerolles and his sister exchanged glances, with a side look at their niece, Count Adam, and Paz. It was one of those swift dramas which are played only in Italy or in Paris. Only in these two

parts of the world—excepting at all courts—can the eyes say as much. To infuse into the eye all the power of the soul, to give it the full value of speech and throw a poem or a drama into a single flash, excessive servitude or excessive liberty is needed.

Adam, the Marquis du Rouvre, and the Countess did not perceive this flash of observation between a past coquette and an old diplomatist; but Paz, like a faithful dog, understood its forecast. It was, you must remember, an affair of two seconds. To describe the hurricane that ravaged the Captain's heart would be too elaborate for these days.

"What! The uncle and aunt already fancy that she perhaps loves me?" said he to himself. "My happiness then depends only on my own audacity.—And Adam! . . ."

Ideal love and mere desire, both quite as potent as friendship and gratitude, rent his soul, and for a moment love had the upper hand. This poor heroic lover longed to have his day! Paz became witty; he intended to please, and in answer to some question from M. de Ronquerolles he sketched in grand outlines the Polish rebellion. Thus, at dessert, Paz saw Clémentine hanging on his lips, regarding him as a hero, and forgetting that Adam, after sacrificing a third of his immense fortune, had taken the risks of exile. At nine o'clock, having taken coffee, Mme. de Sérizy kissed her niece on the forehead and took leave, carrying off Count Adam with an assertion of authority, and leaving the Marquis du Rouvre and M. de Ronquerolles, who withdrew ten minutes later. Paz and Clémentine were left together.

"I will bid you good-night, madame," said Thaddeus; "you will join them at the opera."

"No," replied she. "I do not care for dancing, and they are giving an odious ballet this evening, *The Revolt of the Seraglio.*"

There was a moment's silence.

"Two years ago Adam would not have gone without me," she went on, without looking at Paz.

"He loves you to distraction——" Thaddeus began.

"Oh! it is because he loves me to distraction that by to-morrow he will perhaps have ceased to love me!" exclaimed the Countess.

"The women of Paris are inexplicable," said Thaddeus. "When they are loved to distraction, they want to be loved rationally; when they are loved rationally, they accuse a man of not knowing how to love."

"And they are always right, Thaddeus," she replied with a smile. "I know Adam well; I owe him no grudge for it; he is fickle, and, above all, a great gentleman; he will always be pleased to have me for his wife, and will never thwart me in any of my tastes; but——"

"What marriage was ever without a but?" said Thaddeus gently, trying to give the Countess's thoughts another direction.

The least conceited man would perhaps have had the thought which nearly drove this lover mad, "If I do not tell her that I love her," said he to himself, "I am an idiot!"

There was silence between these two, one of those terrible pauses which seem bursting with thoughts. The Countess fixed a covert gaze on Paz, and Paz

watched her in a mirror. Sitting back in his armchair, like a man given up to digestion, in the attitude of an old man or an indifferent husband, the Captain clasped his hands over his stomach, and mechanically twirled his thumbs, looking stupidly at their rapid movement.

"But say something good about Adam!" exclaimed Clémentine. "Tell me that he is not fickle, you who know him so well."

The appeal was sublime.

"This is the opportunity for raising an insurmountable barrier between us," thought the unhappy Paz, devising a heroic lie.—"Something good?" he said aloud. "I love him too well, you would not believe me. I am incapable of telling you any evil of him. . . . And so . . . madame, I have a hard part to play between you two."

Clémentine looked down, fixing her eyes on his patent-leather shoes.

"You Northerners have mere physical courage, you have no constancy in your decisions," said she in a low tone.

"What are you going to do alone, madame?" replied Paz, with a perfectly ingenuous expression.

"You are not going to keep me company?"

"Forgive me for leaving you."

"Why! where are you going?"

"I am going to the circus; it is the first night, in the Champs-Élysées, and I must not fail to be there. . . ."

"Why not?" asked Clémentine, with a half-angry flash.

"Must I lay bare my heart?" he replied, coloring, "and confide to you what I conceal from my dear Adam, who believes that I love Poland alone?"

"What! our dear, noble Captain has a secret?"

"A disgrace which you will understand, and for which you can comfort me."

"A disgrace!—you? . . ."

"Yes, I—Count Paz, am madly in love with a girl who was touring round France with the Bouthor family, people who have a circus after the pattern of Franconi's, but who only perform at fairs! I got her an engagement from the manager of the Cirque-Olympique."

"Is she handsome?" asked the Countess.

"In my eyes," he replied sadly. "Malaga, that is her name to the public, is strong, nimble, and supple. Why do I prefer her to every other woman in the world?—Indeed, I cannot tell you. When I see her with her black hair tied back with blue ribbons that float over her bare olive-tinted shoulders, dressed in a white tunic with a gilt border, and silk tights which make her appear a living Greek statue, her feet in frayed satin slippers, flourishing flags in her hand to the sound of a military band, and flying through an enormous hoop covered with paper which crashes in the air—when her horse rushes round at a gallop, and she gracefully drops on to him again, applauded, honestly applauded, by a whole people—well, it excites me."

"More than a woman at a ball?" said Clémentine, with insinuating surprise.

"Yes," said Paz in a choked voice. "This splendid agility, this unfailing grace in constant peril, seem to me the greatest triumph of woman. Yes, madame, Cinti and Malibran, Grisi and Taglioni, Pasta and Elsler, all who reign or ever reigned on the boards. seem to

me unworthy to untie Malaga's shoestrings—Malaga, who can mount or dismount a horse at a mad gallop, who slips under him from the left to reappear on the right, who flutters about the most fiery steed like a white will-o'-the-wisp, who can stand on the tip of one toe and then drop, sitting with her feet hanging, on a horse still galloping round, and who finally stands on his back without any reins, knitting a stocking, beating eggs, or stirring an omelet, to the intense admiration of the people, the true people, the peasantry and soldiers. During the walk round, madame, that enchanting Columbine used to carry chairs balanced on the tip of her nose, the prettiest Greek nose I ever saw. Malaga is dexterity personified. Her strength is Herculean; with her tiny fist or her little foot she can shake off three or four men. She is the goddess of athletics."

"She must be stupid."

"Oh!" cried Paz, "she is as amusing as the heroine of *Peveril of the Peak*. As heedless as a gypsy, she says everything that comes into her head; she cares no more for the future than you care for the halfpence you throw to a beggar, and she lets out really sublime things. Nothing will ever convince her that an old diplomat is a handsome young man, and a million of francs would not make her change her opinion. Her love for a man is a perpetual flattery. Enjoying really insolent health, her teeth are two and thirty Oriental pearls set in coral. Her 'snout'—so she calls the lower part of her face—is, as Shakespeare has it, as fresh and sweet as a heifer's muzzle. And it can give bitter pain! She respects fine men, strong men—an Adolphus, an Augustus, an Alexander—acrobats and tumblers. Her teacher, a horrible Cassandro, thrashed her unmercifully; it cost thousands of blows to give her such agility, grace, and intrepidity."

"You are drunk with Malaga!" said the Countess.

"Her name is Malaga only on the posters," said Paz, with a look of annoyance. "She lives in the Rue Saint-Lazare, in a little apartment on the third floor, in velvet and silk, like a princess. She leads two lives—one as a dancer, and one as a pretty woman."

"And does she love you?"

"She loves me—you will laugh—solely because I am a Pole. She sees in every Pole a Poniatowski, as he is shown in the print, jumping into the Elster; for to every Frenchman the Elster, in which it is impossible to drown, is a foaming torrent which swallowed up Poniatowski. —And with all this I am very unhappy, madame——"

Clémentine was touched by a tear of rage in the Captain's eye.

"You love the extraordinary, you men," said she.

"And you?" asked Thaddeus.

"I know Adam so well that I know he could forget me for some acrobatic tumbler like your Malaga. But where did you find her?"

"At Saint-Cloud, last September, at the fair. She was standing in a corner of the platform covered with canvas where the performers walk round. Her comrades, all dressed as Poles, were making a terrible Babel. I saw her silent and dreamy, and fancied I could guess that her thoughts were melancholy. Was there not enough to make her so—a girl

of twenty? That was what touched me."

The Countess was leaning in a bewitching attitude, pensive, almost sad.

"Poor, poor Thaddeus!" she exclaimed. And with the good-fellowship of a really great lady, she added, not without a meaning smile, "Go; go to the circus!"

Thaddeus took her hand and kissed it, dropping a hot tear, and then went out. After having invented a passion for a circus-rider, he must give it some reality. Of his whole story nothing had been true but the minute's attention he had given to the famous Malaga, the rider of the Bouthor troupe at Saint-Cloud; her name had just caught his eye on an advertisement of the circus. The clown, bribed by a single five-franc piece, had told Paz that the girl was a foundling, or had perhaps been stolen.

Thaddeus now went to the circus and saw the handsome horsewoman again. For ten francs, a groom—they fill the place of dressers at a circus—informed him that Malaga's name was Marguerite Turquet, and that she lived in the Rue des Fossés-du-Temple, on a fifth floor.

Next day, with death in his soul, Paz found his way to that quarter, and asked for Mlle. Turquet, in summer the understudy of the principal rider at the cirque, and in winter, "a super" in a Boulevard theater.

"Malaga!" shouted the doorkeeper, rushing into the attic, "here is a fine gentleman for you! He is asking Chapuzot all about you; and Chapuzot is cramming him to give me time to let you know."

"Thank you, Mme. Chapuzot; but what will he say to find me ironing my gown?"

"Pooh, stuff! When a man is in love, he loves everything about you."

"Is he an Englishman? They are fond of horses."

"No. He looks to me like a Spaniard."

"So much the worse. The Spaniards are down in the market they say.—Stay here, Mme. Chapuzot, I shall not look so left to myself."

"Who were you wanting, monsieur?" said the woman, opening the door to Thaddeus.

"Mlle. Turquet."

"My child," said the porter's wife, wrapping her shawl round her, "here is somebody asking for you."

A rope on which some linen was airing knocked off the Captain's hat.

"What is your business, monsieur?" asked Malaga, picking it up.

"I saw you at the circus; you remind me, mademoiselle, of a daughter I lost; and out of affection for my Héloïse, whom you are so wonderfully like, I should wish to be of use to you if you will allow me."

"Well, to be sure! But sit down, M. le Général," said Mme. Chapuzot. "You cannot say fairer—nor handsomer."

"I am not by way of love-making, my good lady," said Paz. "I am a father in deep distress, eager to be cheated by a likeness."

"And so I am to pass as your daughter?" said Malaga, very roguishly, and without suspecting the absolute truth of the statement.

"Yes," said Paz. "I will come sometimes to see you; and that the illusion may be perfect, I will place you in handsome lodgings, nicely furnished——"

"I shall have furniture of my own?" said Malaga, looking at Mme. Chapuzot.

"And servants," Paz went on; "and live quite at your ease."

Malaga looked at the stranger from under her brow.

"From what country are you, monsieur?"

"I am a Pole."

"Then I accept," said she.

Paz went away, promising to call again.

"That is a tough one!" said Marguerite Turquet, looking at Mme. Chapuzot. "But I am afraid this man is wheedling me to humor some fancy. Well, I will risk it."

A month after this whimsical scene, the fair circus-rider was established in rooms charmingly furnished by Count Adam's upholsterer, for Paz wished that his folly should be talked about in the Laginski household. Malaga, to whom the adventure was like an Arabian Night's dream, was waited on by the Chapuzot couple—at once her servants and her confidants. The Chapuzots and Marguerite Turquet expected some startling climax; but at the end of three months, neither Malaga nor the Chapuzots could account for the Polish Count's fancy. Paz would spend about an hour there once a week, during which he sat in the drawing-room, never choosing to go either into Malaga's boudoir nor into her bedroom, which, in fact, he never entered in spite of the cleverest maneuvering on her part and on that of the Chapuzots. The Count inquired about the little incidents that varied the horsewoman's life, and on going away he always left two forty-franc pieces on the chimney-shelf.

"He looks dreadfully bored," said Mme. Chapuzot.

"Yes," replied Malaga, "that man is as cold as frost after a thaw."

"He is a jolly good fellow, all the same," cried Chapuzot, delighted to see himself dressed in blue Elbeuf cloth, and as smart as a minister's office messenger.

Paz, by his periodical tribute, made Marguerite Turquet an allowance of three hundred and twenty francs a month. This sum, added to her small earnings at the circus, secured her a splendid existence as compared with her past squalor. Strange tales were current among the performers at the circus as to Malaga's good fortune. The girl's vanity allowed her rent to be stated at sixty thousand francs, instead of the modest six thousand which her rooms cost the prudent Captain. According to the clowns and supers, Malaga ate off silver plate; and she certainly came to the circus in pretty burnouses, in shawls, and elegant scarfs. And, to crown all, the Pole was the best fellow a circus-rider could come across; never tiresome, never jealous, leaving Malaga perfect freedom.

"Some women are so lucky!" said Malaga's rival. "Such a thing would never happen to me, though I bring in a third of the receipts."

Malaga wore smart "coal-scuttles," and sometimes gave herself airs in a carriage in the Bois de Boulogne, where the youth of fashion began to observe her. In short, Malaga was talked about in the flash world of equivocal women, and her good fortune was attacked by calumny. She was reported to be a somnambulist, and the Pole was said to be a magnetizer in search of the Philosopher's Stone. Other comments

of a far more venomous taint made Malaga more inquisitive than Psyche; she reported them, with tears, to Paz.

"When I owe a woman a grudge," said she to conclude, "I do not calumniate her, I do not say that a man magnetizes her to find stones. I say that she is a bad lot, and I prove it. Why do you get me into trouble?"

Paz was cruelly speechless.

Mme. Chapuzot succeeded at last in discovering his name and title. Then, at the Hôtel Laginski, she ascertained some positive facts: Thaddeus was unmarried, he was not known to have a dead daughter either in Poland or France. Malaga could not help feeling a thrill of terror.

"My dear child," said Mme. Chapuzot, "that monster——"

A man who was satisfied with gazing at a beautiful creature like Malaga—gazing at her by stealth—from under his brows—not daring to come to any decision—without any confidence; such a man, in Mme. Chapuzot's mind, must be a monster. "That monster is breaking you in, to lead you on to something illegal or criminal. God above us! if you were to be brought up at the Assizes—and it makes me shudder from head to foot to think of it, I quake only to speak of it—or in the Criminal Court, and your name was in the newspapers! . . . Do you know what I should do in your place? Well, in your place, to make all safe, I should warn the police."

One day, when mad notions were fermenting in Malaga's brain, Paz having laid his gold pieces on the velvet chimney-shelf, she snatched up the money and flung it in his face, saying, "I will not take stolen money!"

The Captain gave the gold to the Chapuzots, and came no more.

Clémentine was spending the summer on the estate of her uncle, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, in Burgundy.

When the troupe at the circus no longer saw Thaddeus in his seat, there was a great talk among the artists. Malaga's magnanimity was regarded as folly by some, as cunning by others. The Pole's behavior, as explained to the most experienced of the women, seemed inexplicable. In the course of a single week, Thaddeus received thirty-seven letters from women of the town. Happily for him, his singular reserve gave rise to no curiosity in fashionable circles, and remained the subject of discussion in the flash set only.

Two months later, the handsome rider, swamped in debt, wrote to Count Paz the following letter, which the dandies of the day regarded as a masterpiece:

"You, whom I still venture to call my friend, will you not take pity on me after what passed between us, which you took so ill? My heart disowns everything that could hurt your feelings. If I was so happy as to make you feel some charm when you sat near me, as you used to do, come again . . . otherwise, I shall sink into despair. Poverty has come upon me already, and you do not know what stupid things it brings with it. Yesterday I lived on a herring for two sous and one sou's worth of bread. Is that a breakfast for the woman you love? The Chapuzots have left me after seeming so devoted to me. Your absence has shown me the shallowness of human attachment. A bailiff, who turned a

deaf ear to me, has seized everything on behalf of the landlord, who has no pity, and of the jeweler, who will not wait even ten days; for with you men, credit vanishes with confidence. What a position for a woman who has nothing to reproach herself for but a little amusement! My dear friend, I have taken everything of any value to my uncle's; I have nothing left but by memory of you, and the hard weather is coming on. All through the winter I shall have no fire, since nothing but melodrama is played at the Boulevard, in which I have nothing to do but tiny parts, which do not show a woman off. How could you misunderstand my noble feelings towards you, for, after all, we have not two ways of expressing our gratitude? How is it that you, who seemed so pleased to see me comfortable, could leave me in misery? Oh, my only friend on earth, before I go back to travel from fair to fair with the Bouthors—for so, at any rate, I can make my living—forgive me for wanting to know if I have really lost you forever. If I should happen to think of you just as I was jumping through the hoop, I might break my legs by missing time. Come what may, I am yours for life.

"Marguerite Turquet."

"This letter," exclaimed Thaddeus, shouting with laughter, "is well worth my ten thousand francs."

Clémentine came home on the following day, and Paz saw her once more, lovelier and more gracious than ever. During dinner the Countess preserved an air of perfect indifference towards Thaddeus, but a scene took place between the Count and his wife after their friend had left. Thaddeus, with an affectation of asking Adam's advice, had left Malaga's letter in his hands, as if by accident.

"Poor Thaddeus!" said Adam to his wife, after seeing Paz make his escape. "What a misfortune for a man of his superior stamp to be the plaything of a ballet-girl of the lowest class! He will love anything; he will degrade himself; he will be unrecognizable before long. Here, my dear, read that," and he handed her Malaga's letter.

Clémentine read the note, which smelt of tobacco, and tossed it away with disgust.

"However thick the bandage over his eyes may be, he must have found something out. Malaga must have played him some faithless trick."

"And he is going back to her!" cried Clémentine. "He will forgive her! You men can have no pity for any but those horrible women!"

"They want it so badly!" said Adam.

"Thaddeus did himself justice—by keeping to himself!" said she.

"Oh, my dearest, you go too far," said the Count, who, though he was at first delighted to lower his friend in his wife's eyes, would not the death of the sinner.

Thaddeus, who knew Adam well, had begged for absolute secrecy; he had only spoken, he said, as an excuse for his dissipations, and to beg his friend to allow him to have a thousand crowns for Malaga.

"He is a man of great pride," Adam went on.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, to have spent no more than

ten thousand francs on her, and to wait for such a letter as that to rouse him before taking her the money to pay her debts! For a Pole, on my honor! . . ."

"But he may ruin you!" said Clémentine in the acrid tone of a Parisian woman when she expresses her cat-like distrustfulness.

"Oh! I know him," said Adam. "He would sacrifice Malaga to us."

"We shall see," replied the Countess. "If it were needful for his happiness, I should not hesitate to ask him to give her up. Constantine tells me that during the time he was seeing her, Paz, usually so sober, sometimes came in quite fuddled. If he allowed himself to take to drink, I should be as much grieved as if he were my son."

"Do not tell me any more!" cried the Countess with another gesture of disgust.

Two days later the Captain could see in her manner, in the tone of her voice, in her eyes, the terrible results of Adam's betrayal. Scorn had opened gulfs between him and this charming woman. And he fell forthwith into deep melancholy, devoured by this thought, "You have made yourself unworthy of her." Life became a burden to him; the bright sunshine was gloomy in his eyes. Nevertheless, under these floods of bitter thought, he had some happy moments: he could now give himself up without danger to his admiration for the Countess, who never paid him the slightest attention when, at a party, hidden in a corner, mute, all eyes and all heart, he did not lose one of her movements, not a note of her song when she sang. He lived in this enchanting life: he might himself groom the horse that she was to ride, and devote himself to the management of her splendid house with redoubled care for its interests.

These unspoken joys were buried in his heart like those of a mother, whose child never knows anything of his mother's heart: for is it knowledge so long as even one thing remains unknown? Was not this finer than Petrarch's chaste passion for Laura, which, after all, was well repaid by a wealth of glory, and by the triumph of the poetry she had inspired? Was not the emotion which Assas felt in dying, in truth a whole life? This emotion Paz felt every day without dying, but also without the guerdon of immortality.

What is there in love that Paz, notwithstanding these secret delights, was consumed by sorrow? The Catholic religion has so elevated love that she has married it inseparably, so to speak, to esteem and generosity. Love does not exist apart from the fine qualities of which man is proud, and so rarely are we loved if we are contemned that Thaddeus was perishing of his self-inflicted wounds. Only to hear her say that she could have loved him, and then to die! The hapless lover would have thought his life well paid for. The torments of his previous position seemed to him preferable to living close to her, loading her with his generosity without being appreciated or understood. In short, he wanted the price of his virtue.

He grew thin and yellow, and fell so thoroughly ill, consumed by low fever, that during the month of January he kept his bed, though refusing to see a physician. Count Adam grew extremely uneasy about his poor Thaddeus. The Countess then was so cruel as to say, when they were together one day, "Let

him alone; do not you see that he has some Olympian remorse?"

This speech stung Thaddeus to the courage of despair; he got up, went out, tried some amusement, and recovered his health.

In the month of February Adam lost a rather considerable sum at the Jockey Club, and, being afraid of his wife, he begged Thaddeus to place this sum to the account of his extravagance for Malaga.

"What is there strange in the notion that the ballet-girl should have cost you twenty thousand francs? It concerns no one but me. Whereas, if the Countess should know that I had lost it at play, I should fall in her esteem, and she would be in alarm for the future."

"This to crown all!" cried Thaddeus, with a deep sigh.

"Ah! Thaddeus, this service would make us quits if I were not already the debtor."

"Adam, you may have children. Give up gambling," said his friend.

"Twenty thousand francs more that Malaga has cost us!" exclaimed the Countess some days after, on discovering Adam's generosity to Paz. "And ten thousand before—that is thirty thousand in all! Fifteen hundred francs a year, the price of my box at the Italian opera, a whole fortune to many people. . . . Oh! you Poles are incomprehensible!" cried she, as she picked some flowers in her beautiful conservatory. "You care no more than that!"

"Poor Paz——"

"Poor Paz, poor Paz!" she echoed, interrupting him. "What good does he do us? I will manage the house myself! Give him the hundred louis a year that he refused, and let him make his own arrangements with the Olympic Circus."

"He is of the greatest use to us; he has saved us at least forty thousand francs this year. In short, my dearest, he has placed a hundred thousand francs for us in Nucingen's bank, and a steward would have netted them."

Clémentine was softened, but she was not the less hard on Thaddeus.

Some days after she desired Paz to come to her in her boudoir, where, a year since, she had been startled by comparing him with the Count. This time she received him alone, without any suspicion of danger.

"My dear Paz," said she, with the careless familiarity of fine folks to their inferors, "if you love Adam as you say you do, you will do one thing which he will never ask, but which I, as his wife, do not hesitate to require of you ——"

"It is about Malaga?" said Thaddeus with deep irony.

"Well, yes, it is," she said. "If you want to end your days with us, if you wish that we should remain friends, give her up. How can an old soldier——"

"I am but five and thirty, and have not a gray hair!"

"You look as if you had," said she, "and that is the same thing. How can a man so capable of putting two and two together, so superior . . ."

What was horrible was that she spoke the word with such an evident intention of rousing in him the nobleness of soul which she believed to be dead.

"So superior as you are," she went on, after a little pause, which a gesture

from Paz forced upon her, "allow yourself to be entrapped like a boy. Your affair with her has made Malaga famous. —Well! My uncle wanted to see her, and he saw her. My uncle is not the only one; Malaga is very ready to receive all these gentlemen.—I believe you to be high-minded.—Take shame to yourself! Come, would she be an irreparable loss to you?"

"Madame, if I knew of any sacrifice by which I might recover your esteem, it would soon be made; but to give up Malaga is not a sacrifice——"

"In your place that is what I should say if I were a man," replied Clémentine. "Well, but if I take it as a great sacrifice, there is nothing to be angry at."

Paz went away, fearing he might do some mad act; he felt his brain invaded by crazy notions. He went out for a walk, lightly dressed in spite of the cold, but failed to cool the burning of his face and brow. "I believed you to be high-minded!" He heard the words again and again. "And scarcely a year ago," said he to himself, "to hear Clémentine, I had beaten the Russians single-handed!" He thought of quitting the Laginski household, of asking to be sent on service in the Spahi regiment, and getting himself killed in Africa; but a dreadful fear checked him: "What would become of them without me? They would soon be ruined. Poor Countess, what a horrible life it would be for her to be reduced even to thirty thousand francs a year! Come," said he to himself, "since she can never be yours, courage, finish your work!"

As all the world knows, since 1830 the Carnival in Paris has grown to prodigious proportions, making it European, and burlesque, and animated to a far greater degree than the departed carnivals of Venice. Is this because, since fortunes have so enormously diminished, Parisians have thought of amusing themselves collectively, just as in their clubs they have a drawing-room without any mistress of the house, without politeness, and quite cheap? Be this as it may, the month of March was prodigal of those balls, where dancing, farce, coarse fun, delirium, grotesque figures, and banter made keen by Paris wit, achieved gigantic results. This madness had its Pandemonium at that time in the Rue Saint-Honoré, and its Napoleon in Musard, a little man born to rule an orchestra as tremendous as the rampant mob, and to conduct a galop—that whirl of witches at their Sabbath, and one of Auber's triumphs, for the galop derived its form and its poetry from the famous galop in *Gustavus*. May not this vehement finale serve as a symbol of any age when, for fifty years, everything has rushed on with the swiftness of a dream?

Now, our grave Thaddeus, bearing an immaculate image in his heart, went to Malaga to invite her, the queen of carnival dancing, to spend an evening at Musard's as soon as he learned that the Countess, disguised to the teeth, was intending to come with two other young ladies, escorted by their husbands, to see the curious spectacle of one of these monster balls. On Shrove Tuesday night, in the year of grace 1838, at four o'clock in the morning, the Countess, wrapped in a black domino, and seated on a bench of one of the amphitheaters of the Babylonian hall where Valentino

has since given his concerts, saw Thaddeus, dressed as Robert Macaire, leading the circus-rider in the costume of a savage, her head dressed with nodding plumes like a horse at a coronation, and leaping among the groups like a perfect Jack-o'-lantern.

"Oh!" exclaimed Clémentine to her husband, "you Poles are not men of character. Who would not have felt sure of Thaddeus? He gave me his word, not knowing that I should be here and see all without being seen."

Some days after this she invited Paz to dinner. After dinner Adam left them together, and Clémentine scolded Thaddeus in such a way as to make him feel that she would no longer have him about the house.

"Indeed, madame," said Thaddeus humbly, "you are quite right. I am a wretch; I had pledged my word. But what can I do? I put off the parting with Malaga till after the Carnival. . . . And I will be honest with you; the woman has so much power over me . . ."

"A woman who gets herself turned out of Musard's by the police, and for such dancing?"

"I admit it; I sit condemned; I will quit your house. But you know Adam. If I hand over to you the conduct of your affairs, you will have to exert great energy. Though I have the vice of Malaga, I know how to keep an eye on your concerns, how to manage your household, and superintend the smallest details. Allow me then to remain till I have seen you qualified to continue my system of management. You have now been married three years, and are safe from the first follies consequent on the honeymoon. The ladies of Paris society, even with the highest titles, understand very well in these days how to control a fortune and a household. . . . Well, as soon as I am assured, not of your capacity, but of your firmness, I will leave Paris."

"It is Thaddeus of Warsaw that speaks, not Thaddeus of the circus. Come back to us cured."

"Cured?—Never!" said Paz, his eyes fixed on Clémentine's pretty feet. "You cannot know, Countess, all the spice, the unexpectedness there is in that woman's wit." And feeling his courage fail him, he added, "There is not a single woman of fashion, with her prim airs, who is worth that frank young animal nature."

"In fact, I should not choose to have anything in me of the animal!" said the Countess, with a flashing look like an adder in a rage.

After that day Count Paz explained to Clémentine all her affairs, made himself her tutor, taught her the difficulties of managing her property, the real cost of things, and the way to avoid being too extensively robbed by her people. She might trust Constantine, and make him her major-domo. Thaddeus had trained Constantine. By the month of May he thought the Countess perfectly capable of administering her fortune; for Clémentine was one of those clear-sighted women whose instincts are alert, with an inborn genius for household rule.

The situation thus naturally brought about by Thaddeus took a sudden turn most distressing for him, for his sufferings were not so light as he made them seem. The hapless lover had not reck-

oned with accident. Adam fell very seriously ill. Thaddeus, instead of leaving, installed himself as his friend's sick-nurse. His devotedness was indefatigable. A woman who had had an interest in looking through the telescope of foresight would have seen in the Captain's heroism the sort of punishment which noble souls inflict on themselves to subdue their involuntary thoughts of sin; but women see everything or nothing, according to their frame of mind; love is their sole luminary.

For forty-five days Paz watched and nursed Mitgislas without seeming to have a thought of Malaga, for the excellent reason that he never did think of her. Clémentine, seeing Adam at death's door, and yet not dead, had a consultation of the most famous doctors.

"If he gets through this," said the most learned of the physicians, "it can only be by an effort of nature. It lies with those who nurse him to watch for the moment and aid nature. The Count's life is in the hands of his attendants."

Thaddeus went to communicate this verdict to Clémentine, who was sitting in the Chinese pavilion, as much to rest after her fatigues as to leave the field free for the doctors, and not to be in their way. As he trod the graveled paths leading from the boudoir to the rockery on which the Chinese summer-house was built, Clémentine's lover felt as though he were in one of the gulfs described by Alighieri. The unhappy man had never foreseen the chance of becoming Clémentine's husband, and he had bogged himself in a swamp of mud. When he reached her his face was set, sublime in its despair. Like Medusa's head, it communicated terror.

"He is dead?" said Clémentine.

"They have given no hope; at least, they leave it to nature. Do not go in just yet. They are still there, and Bianchon himself is examining him."

"Poor fellow!—I wonder whether I have ever worried him," she said.

"You have made him very happy; be quite easy on that point," said Thaddeus; "and you have been indulgent to him——"

"The loss will be irreparable."

"But, dear lady, supposing the Count should die, had you not formed your opinion of him?"

"I do not love him blindly," she said; "but I loved as a wife ought to love her husband."

"Then," said Thaddeus, in a voice new to Clémentine's experience of him, "you ought to feel less regret than if you were losing one of those men who are a woman's pride, her love, her whole life! You may be frank with such a friend as I am. . . . I shall regret him —I! Long before your marriage I had made him my child, and I have devoted my life to him. I shall have no interest left on earth. But life still has charms for a widow of four and twenty."

"Why, you know very well that I love no one," said she, with the roughness of sorrow.

"You do not know yet what it is to love," said Thaddeus.

"Oh! husband for husband, I have sense enough to prefer a child like my poor Adam to a superior man. For nearly a month now we have been asking ourselves, 'Will he live?' These fluctuations have prepared me, as they

have you, for this end. I may be frank with you?—Well, then, I would give part of my life to save Adam's. Does not independence for a woman, here in Paris, mean liberty to be gulled by the pretence of love in men who are ruined or profligate? I have prayed God to spare me my husband—so gentle, such a good fellow, so little fractious, and who was beginning to be a little afraid of me."

"You are honest, and I like you the better for it," said Thaddeus, taking Clémentine's hands, which she allowed him to kiss. "In such a solemn moment there is indescribable satisfaction in finding a woman devoid of hypocrisy. It is possible to talk to you.—Consider the future; supposing God should not listen to you—and I am one of those who are most ready to cry to Him: Spare my friend!—for these fifty nights past have not made my eyes heavy, and if thirty days and thirty nights more care are needed, you, madame, may sleep while I watch. I will snatch him from death, if, as they say, he can be saved by care. But if, in spite of you, in spite of me, the Count is dead. Well, then, if you were loved, or worshiped, by a man whose heart and character were worthy of yours——"

"I have perhaps madly wished to be loved, but I have never met——"

"Supposing you were mistaken."

Clémentine looked steadily at Thaddeus, suspecting him less of loving her than of a covetous dream; she poured contempt on him by a glance, measuring him from head to foot, and crushed him with two words, "Poor Malaga!" pronounced in those tones such as fine ladies alone can find in the gamut of their contempt.

She rose and left Thaddeus fainting, for she did not turn round, but walked with great dignity back to her boudoir, and thence up to her husband's room.

An hour later Paz returned to the sick man's bedside, and gave all his care to the Count, as though he had not received his own death-blow.

From that dreadful moment he became silent; he had a duel to fight with disease, and he carried it through in a way that excited the admiration of the doctors. At any hour his eyes were always beaming like two lamps. Without showing the slightest resentment towards Clémentine, he listened to her thanks without accepting them; he seemed deaf. He had said to himself, "She shall owe Adam's life to me!" and these words he had, as it were, written in letters of fire in the sick man's room.

At the end of a fortnight Clémentine was obliged to give up some of the nursing, or risk falling ill from so much fatigue. Paz was inexhaustible. At last, about the end of August, Bianchon, the family doctor, answered for the Count's life:

"Ah, madame," said he to Clémentine, "you are under not the slightest obligation to me. But for his friend we could not have saved him!"

On the day after the terrible scene in the Chinese pavilion, the Marquis de Ronquerolles had come to see his nephew, for he was setting out for Russia with a secret mission; and Paz, overwhelmed by the previous evening, and spoken a few words to the diplomat.

On the very day when Count Adam and his wife went out for the first time for a drive, at the moment when the carriage was turning from the steps, an orderly came into the courtyard and asked for Count Paz. Thaddeus, who was sitting with his back to the horses, turned round to take a letter bearing the stamp of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and put it into the side-pocket of his coat, with a decision which precluded any questions on the part of Clémentine or Adam. It cannot be denied that persons of good breeding are masters of the language that uses no speech. Nevertheless, as they reached the Porte Maillot, Adam, assuming the privilege of a convalescent whose whims must be indulged, said to Thaddeus:

"There can be no indiscretions between two brothers who love each other as you and I do; you know what is in that letter; tell me, I am in a fever of curiosity."

Clémentine looked at Thaddeus as an angry woman can, and said to her husband, "He has been so sulky with me these two months that I shall take good care not to press him."

"Oh dear me!" replied Thaddeus, "as I cannot hinder the newspapers from publishing it, I may very well reveal the secret. The Emperor Nicholas does me the favor of appointing me captain on service in a regiment starting with the Khiva Expedition."

"And you are going?" cried Adam.

"I shall go my dear fellow. I came as captain, and as captain I return. Malaga might lead me to make a fool of myself. We shall dine together tomorrow for the last time. If I did not set out in September for St. Petersburg, I should have to travel overland, and I am not rich. I must leave Malaga her little independence. How can I fail to provide for the future of the only woman who has understood me? Malaga thinks me a great man! Malaga thinks me handsome! Malaga may perhaps be faithless, but she would go through——"

"Through a hoop for you, and fall on her feet on horseback!" said Clémentine sharply.

"Oh, you do not know Malaga," said the Captain, with deep bitterness, and an ironical look which made Clémentine uneasy and silent.

"Farewell to the young trees of this lovely Bois de Boulogne, where Parisian ladies drive, and the exiles wander who have found a home here. I know that my eyes will never again see the green trees of the Allée de Mademoiselle, or of the Route des Dames, nor the acacias, nor the cedar at the Ronds-points.

"On the Asiatic frontier, obedient to the schemes of the great Emperor I have chosen to be my master, promoted perhaps to command an army, for sheer courage, for constantly risking my life, I may indeed regret the Champs-Élysées where you, once, made me take a place in the carriage, by your side.—Finally, I shall never cease to regret the severity of Malaga—of the Malaga I am at this moment thinking of."

This was said in a tone that made Clémentine shiver.

"Then you love Malaga very truly?" she said.

"I have sacrificed for her the honor we never sacrifice——"

"Which?"

"That which we would fain preserve

at any cost in the eyes of the idol we worship."

After this speech Thaddeus kept impenetrable silence; he broke it only when, as they drove down the Champs-Élysées, he pointed to a wooden structure and said, "There is the circus!"

Before their last dinner he went to the Russian Embassy for a few minutes, and from thence to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and he started for Le Havre next morning before the Countess and Adam were up.

"I have lost a friend," said Adam, with tears in his eyes, as he learned that Count Paz was gone, "a friend in the truest sense of the word, and I cannot think what has made him flee from my house as if it were the plague. We are not the sort of friends to quarrel over a woman," he went on, looking full at Clémentine, "and yet all he said yesterday about Malaga—But he never laid the tip of his finger on the girl."

"How do you know?" asked Clémentine.

"Well, I was naturally curious to see Mlle. Turquet, and the poor girl cannot account for Thaddeus's extraordinary reserve——"

"That is enough," said the Countess, going off to her own room, and saying to herself, "I have surely been the victim of some sublime hoax."

She had scarcely made the reflection, when Constantine placed in her hands the following letter, which Thaddeus had scrawled in the night:

"Countess,—To go to be killed in the Caucasus, and to bear the burden of your scorn, is too much; a man should die unmutilated. I loved you from the first time I saw you, as a man loves the woman he will love forever, even when she is faithless—I, under obligations to Adam, whom you chose and married—I, so poor, the volunteer steward, devoted to your household. In this dreadful catastrophe I found a delightful existence. To be an indispensable wheel in the machine, to know myself useful to your luxury and comfort, was a source of joy to me; and if that joy had been keen when Adam alone was my care, think what it must have been when the woman I worshiped was at once the cause and the effect! I have known all the joys of motherhood in my love; and I accepted life on those terms. Like the beggars on the high roads, I built myself a hut of stones on the skirts of your beautiful home, but without holding out my hand for alms. I, poor and unhappy, but blinded by Adam's happiness, I was the donor. Yes, you were hedged in by a love as pure as that of a guardian angel; it watched while you slept; it caressed you with a look as you passed by; it was glad merely to exist; in short, you were the sunshine of home to the hapless exile who is now writing to you, with tears in his eyes, as he recalls the happiness of those early days.

"At the age of eighteen, with no one to love me, I had chosen as an ideal mistress a charming woman at Warsaw, to whom I referred all my thoughts and my wishes, the queen of my days and nights. This woman knew nothing of it, but why inform her? For my part, what I loved was love.

"You may fancy, from this adventure of my boyhood, how happy I was, living within the sphere of your influence,

grooming your horse, picking out new gold pieces for your purse, superintending the splendor of your table and your entertainments, seeing you eclipse fortunes greater than your own by my good management. With what zeal did I not rush round Paris when Adam said to me, 'Thaddeus, *she* wants this or that!' It was one of those joys for which there are no words. You have now and again wished for some trifle within a certain time which has compelled me to feats of expedition, driving for six or seven hours in a cab; and what happiness it has been to walk in your service. When I have watched you smiling in the midst of your flowers without being seen by you, I have forgotten that no one loved me—in short, at such moments I was but eighteen again.

"Sometimes, when my happiness turned my brain, I would go at night and kiss the spot where your feet had left, for me, a luminous trace, just as of old I had stolen, with a thief's miraculous skill, to kiss a key which Countess Ladislas had touched on opening a door. The air you breathed was embalmed; to me it was fresh life to breathe it; and I felt, as they say is the case in the tropics, overwhelmed by an atmosphere surcharged with creative elements. I must tell you all these things to account for the strange fatuity of my involuntary thoughts. I would have died sooner than divulge my secret.

"You may remember those few days when you were curious, when you wanted to see the worker of the wonders which had at last struck you with a surprise. I believed—forgive me, madame —I believed that you would love me. Your kindliness, your looks—interpreted by a lover—seemed fraught with so much danger to me that I took up Malaga, knowing that there are liaisons which no woman can forgive; I took the girl up at the moment when I saw that my love was inevitably infectious. Overwhelm me now with the scorn which you poured upon me so freely when I did not deserve it; but I think I may be quite sure that if, on the evening when your aunt took the Count out, I had said what I have here written, having once said it I should have been like the tame tiger who has at last set his teeth in living flesh, and who scents warm blood. . . .

"Midnight.

"I could write no more, the memory of that evening was too vivid! Yes, I was then in a delirium! I saw expectancy in your eyes; victory and its crimson banners may have burned in mine and fascinated yours. My crime was to think such things—and perhaps wrongly. You alone can be judge of that fearful scene when I succeeded in crushing love, desire, the most stupendous forces of manhood under the icy hand of gratitude which must be eternal. Your terrible scorn punished me. You have showed me that neither disgust nor contempt can ever be got over. I love you like a madman. I must have gone away if Adam had died. There is all the more reason since Adam is saved. I did not snatch my friend from the grave to betray him. And, indeed, my departure is the due punishment for the thought that came to me that I would let him die when the

physicians said his life depended on his attendants.

"Farewell, madame; in leaving Paris I lose everything, but you lose nothing in parting with yours most faithfully,

"THADDEUS PAZ."

"If my poor Adam says he has lost a friend, what have I lost?" thought Clémentine, sitting dejected, with her eyes fixed on a flower in the carpet.

This is the note which Constantine delivered privately to his master:

"MY DEAR MITGISLAS,—Malaga has told me all. For the sake of your happiness, never let a word escape you in Clémentine's presence as to your visits to the circus-rider; let her still believe that Malaga costs me a hundred thousand francs. With the Countess's character she will not forgive you either your losses at play or your visits to Malaga.—I am not going to Khiva, but to the Caucasus. I have a fit of spleen, and at the pace I mean to go, in three months I shall be Prince Paz, or dead. Farewell; though I have drawn sixty thousand francs out of Nucingen's, we are quits.

"THADDEUS."

"Idiot that I am! I very nearly betrayed myself just now by speaking of the circus-rider!" said Adam to himself.

Thaddeus has been gone three years, and the papers do not as yet mention any Prince Paz. Countess Laginski takes a keen interest in the Emperor Nicholas' expeditions; she is a Russian at heart, and reads with avidity all the news from that country. Once or twice a year she says to the Ambassador, with an affectation of indifference, "Do you know what has become of our poor friend Paz?"

Alas! most Parisian women, keen-eyed and subtle as they are supposed to be, pass by—and always will pass by—such an one as Paz without observing him. Yes, more than one Paz remains misunderstood; but, fearful thought! some are misunderstood even when they are loved. The simplest woman in the world requires some little coxcombry in the greatest man; and the most heroic love counts for nothing if it is uncut; it needs the arts of the polisher and the jeweler.

In the month of January 1842, Countess Laginski, beautified by gentle melancholy, inspired a mad passion in the Comte de la Palférine, one of the most audacious bucks of Paris at this day. La Palférine understood the difficulty of conquering a woman guarded by a chimera; to triumph over this bewitching woman, he trusted to a surprise, and to the assistance of a woman who, being a little jealous of Clémentine, would lend herself to plot the chances of the adventure.

Clémentine, incapable with all her wit of suspecting such treachery, was so imprudent as to go with this false friend to the masked ball at the opera. At about three in the morning, carried away by the excitement of the ball, Clémentine, for whom la Palférine had exhausted himself in attentions, consented to sup with him, and was getting into the lady's carriage. At this critical moment she was seized by a strong

arm, and in spite of her cries placed in her own carriage, which was standing with the door open, though she did not know that it was waiting.

"He has not left Paris!" she exclaimed, recognizing Thaddeus, who ran off when he saw the carriage drive away with the Countess.

Had ever another woman such a romance in her life?

Clémentine is always hoping to see Paz again.

The Vendetta

Dedicated to Puttinati, Sculptor at Milan

In the year 1800, towards the end of October, a stranger, having with him a woman and a little girl, made his appearance in front of the Tuileries Palace, and stood for some little time close to the ruins of a house, then recently pulled down, on the spot where the wing is still unfinished which was intended to join Catherine de Medici's Palace to the Louvre built by the Valois. There he stood, his arms folded, his head bent, raising it now and again to look at the Consul's Palace, or at his wife, who sat on a stone by his side.

Though the stranger seemed to think only of the little girl of nine or ten, whose black hair was a plaything in his fingers, the woman lost none of the glances shot at her by her companion. A common feeling, other than love, united these two beings, and a common thought animated their thoughts and their actions. Misery is perhaps the strongest of all bonds.

The man had one of those broad, solemn-looking heads, with a mass of hair, of which so many examples have been perpetuated by the Caracci. Among the thick black locks were many white hairs. His features, though fine and proud, had a set hardness which spoiled them. In spite of his powerful and upright frame, he seemed to be more than sixty years of age. His clothes, which were dilapidated, betrayed his foreign origin.

The woman's face, formerly handsome, but now faded, bore a stamp of deep melancholy, though, when her husband looked at her, she forced herself to smile, and affected a calm expression. The little girl was standing, in spite of the fatigue that was written on her small sunburnt face. She had Italian features, large black eyes under well-arched eyebrows, a native dignity and genuine grace. More than one passer-by was touched by the mere sight of this group, for the persons composing it made no effort to disguise a despair evidently as deep as the expression of it was simple; but the spring of the transient kindliness which distinguishes the Parisian is quickly dried up. As soon as the stranger perceived that he was the object of some idler's attention, he stared at him so fiercely that the most intrepid lounger hastened his step, as though he had trodden on a viper.

After remaining there a long time

undecided, the tall man suddenly passed his hand across his brow, driving away, so to speak, the thoughts that had furrowed it with wrinkles, and made up his mind no doubt to some desperate determination. Casting a piercing look at his wife and daughter, he drew out of his jerkin a long dagger, held it out to the woman, and said in Italian, "I am going to see whether the Bonapartes remember us."

He walked on, with a slow, confident step, towards the entrance to the palace, where, of course, he was checked by a soldier on guard, with whom there could be no long discussion. Seeing that the stranger was obstinate, the sentry pointed his bayonet at him by way of ultimatum. As chance would have it at this moment, a squad came round to relieve guard, and the corporal very civilly informed the stranger where he might find the captain of the guard.

"Let Bonaparte know that Bartolomeo di Piombo wants to see him," said the Italian to the officer.

In vain did the captain explain to Bartolomeo that it was not possible to see the First Consul without having written to him beforehand to request an audience. The stranger insisted that the officer should go to inform Bonaparte. The captain urged the rules of his duty, and formally refused to yield to the demands of this strange petitioner. Bartolomeo knit his brows, looked at the captain with a terrible scowl, and seemed to make him responsible for all the disasters his refusal might occasion; then he remained silent, his arms tightly crossed on his breast, and took his stand under the archway which connects the garden and the courtyard of the Tuileries.

People who are thoroughly bent on anything are almost always well served by chance. At the moment when Bartolomeo sat down on one of the curbstones near the entrance to the palace, a carriage drove up, and out of it stepped Lucien Bonaparte, at that time Minister of the Interior.

"Ah! Lucien, good luck for me to have met you!" cried the stranger.

These words, spoken in the Corsican dialect, made Lucien stop at the instant when he was rushing into the vestibule; he looked at his fellow-countryman, and recognized him. At the first word that Bartolomeo said in his ear, he took him with him. Murat, Lannes, and Rapp were in the First Consul's Cabinet. On seeing Lucien come in with so strange a figure as was Piombo, the conversation ceased. Lucien took his brother's hand and led him into a window recess. After exchanging a few words, the First Consul raised his hand with a gesture, which Murat and Lannes obeyed by retiring. Rapp affected not to have seen it, and remained. Then, Bonaparte having sharply called him to order, the aid-de-camp went out with a sour face. The First Consul, who heard the sound of Rapp's steps in the neighboring room, hastily followed him, and saw him close to the wall between the cabinet and the anteroom.

"You refuse to understand me?" said the First Consul. "I wish to be alone with my countryman."

"A Corsican!" retorted the aid-de-camp. "I distrust those creatures too much not to——"

The First Consul could not help

smiling, and lightly pushed his faithful officer by the shoulders.

"Well, and what are you doing here, my poor Bartolomeo?" said the First Consul to Piombo.

"I have come to ask for shelter and protection, if you are a true Corsican," replied Bartolomeo in a rough tone.

"What misfortune has driven you from your native land? You were the richest, the most——"

"I have killed all the Porta," replied the Corsican, in a hollow voice, with a frown.

The First Consul drew back a step or two, like a man astonished.

"Are you going to betray me?" cried Bartolomeo, with a gloomy look at Bonaparte. "Do you forget that there are still four of the Piombo in Corsica?"

Lucien took his fellow-countryman by the arm and shook him.

"Do you come here to threaten the savior of France?" he said vehemently.

Bonaparte made a sign to Lucien, who was silent. Then he looked at Piombo, and said, "And why did you kill all the Porta?"

"We had made friends," he replied; "the Barbanti had reconciled us. The day after we had drunk together to drown our quarrel I left, because I had business at Bastia. They stayed at my place, and set fire to my vineyard at Longone. They killed my son Gregorio; my daughter Ginevra and my wife escaped; they had taken the Communion that morning; the Virgin protected them. When I got home I could no longer see my house; I searched for it with my feet in the ashes. Suddenly I came across Gregorio's body; I recognized it in the moonlight. 'Oh, the Porta have played this trick!' said I to myself. I went off at once into the scrub; I got together a few men to whom I had done some service—do you hear, Bonaparte?—and we marched down on the Porta's vineyard. We arrived at five in the morning, and by seven they were all in the presence of God. Giacomo declares that Elisa Vanni saved a child, little Luigi; but I tied him into bed with my own hands before setting the house on fire. Then I quitted the island with my wife and daughter without being able to make sure whether Luigi Porta were still alive."

Bonaparte looked at Bartolomeo with curiosity, but no astonishment.

"How many were they?" asked Lucien.

"Seven," replied Piombo. "They persecuted you in their day," he added. The words aroused no sign of hatred in the two brothers. "Ah! you are no longer Corsicans!" cried Bartolomeo, with a sort of despair. "Good-by. Formerly I protected you," he went on reproachfully. "But for me your mother would never have reached Marseilles," he said, turning to Bonaparte, who stood thoughtful, his elbow resting on the chimney-piece.

"I cannot in conscience take you under my wing, Piombo," replied Napoleon. "I am the head of a great nation; I govern the Republic; I must see that the laws are carried out."

"Ah, ha!" said Bartolomeo.

"But I can shut my eyes," Bonaparte went on. "The tradition of the vendetta will hinder the reign of law in Corsica for a long time yet," he added, talking to himself. "But it must be stamped out at any cost."

He was silent for a minute, and Lucien signed to Piombo to say nothing. The Corsican shook his head from side to side with a disapproving look.

"Remain here," the First Consul said, addressing Bartolomeo. "We know nothing. I will see that your estates are purchased so as to give you at once the means of living. Then later, some time hence, we will remember you. But no more vendetta. There is no Maquis scrub here. If you play tricks with your dagger, there is no hope for you. Here the law protects everybody, and we do not do justice on our own account."

"He had put himself at the head of a strange people," replied Bartolomeo, taking Lucien's hand and pressing it. "But you recognize me in misfortune; it is a bond between us for life and death; and you may command everyone named Piombo." As he spoke, his brow cleared, and he looked about him approvingly.

"You are not badly off here," he said, with a smile, as if he would like to lodge there. "And you are dressed all in red like a cardinal."

"It rests with you to rise and have a palace in Paris," said Bonaparte, looking at him from head to foot. "It will often happen that I may look about me for a devoted friend to whom I can trust myself."

A sigh of gladness broke from Piombo's deep chest; he held out his hand to the First Consul, saying, "There is something of the Corsican in you still!"

Bonaparte smiled. He gazed in silence at this man, who had brought him as it were a breath of air from his native land, from the island where he had formerly been so miraculously saved from the hatred of the "English party," and which he was fated never to see again. He made a sign to his brother, who led away Bartolomeo di Piombo.

Lucien inquired with interest as to the pecuniary position of the man who had once protected his family. Piombo led the Minister of the Interior to a window and showed him his wife and Ginevra, both seated on a heap of stones.

"We have come from Fontainebleau on foot," said he, "and we have not a sou."

Lucien gave his fellow-countryman his purse, and desired him to come again next morning to consult as to the means of providing for his family. The income from all Piombo's possessions in Corsica could hardly suffice to maintain him respectably in Paris.

Fifteen years elapsed between the arrival of the Piombo family in Paris and the following incidents, which, without the story of this event, would have been less intelligible.

Servin, one of our most distinguished artists, was the first to conceive the idea of opening a studio for young ladies who may wish to take lessons in painting. He was a man of over forty, of blameless habits, and wholly given up to his art; and he had married for love the daughter of a general without any fortune. At first mothers brought their daughters themselves to the professor's studio; but when they understood his high principles and appreciated the care by which he strove to deserve such confidence, they ended

by sending the girls alone. It was part of the painter's scheme to take as pupils only young ladies of rich or highly respectable family, that no difficulties might arise as to the society in his studio; he had even refused to take young girls who intended to become artists, and who must necessarily have had certain kinds of training without which no mastery is possible. By degrees his prudence, the superior method by which he initiated his pupils into the secrets of his art, as well as the security their mothers felt in knowing that their daughters were in the company of well-bred girls, and in the artist's character, manners, and marriage, won him a high reputation in the world of fashion. As soon as a young girl showed any desire to learn drawing or painting, and her mother asked advice, "Send her to Servin," was always the answer.

Thus Servin had a specialty for teaching ladies art, as Herbault had for bonnets, Leroy for dresses, and Chevet for dainties. It was acknowledged that a young woman who had taken lessons of Servin could pronounce definitively on the pictures in the Louvre, paint a portrait in a superior manner, copy an old picture, and produce her own painting of genre. Thus this artist sufficed for all the requirements of the aristocracy.

Notwithstanding his connection with all the best houses in Paris, he was independent and patriotic, preserving with all alike the light and witty tone, sometimes ironical, and the freedom of opinion which characterize painters.

He had carried his scrupulous precautions into the arrangement of the place where his scholars worked. The outer entrance to the loft above his dwelling-rooms had been walled up; to get into this retreat, as sacred as a harem, the way was up a staircase in the center of the house. This studio, which occupied the whole of the top story, was on the vast scale which always surprises inquisitive visitors when, having climbed to sixty feet above the ground, they expect to find an artist lodged in the gutter. It was a kind of gallery, abundantly lighted by immense skylights screened with the large green blinds which artists use to distribute the light. A quantity of caricatures, heads sketched in outline with a brush or the point of a palette knife, all over the dark gray walls, proved that, allowing for a difference in the expression, fine young ladies have as much whimsicality in their brain as men can have. A small stove, with a huge pipe that made amazing zigzags before reaching the upper region of the roof, was the inevitable decoration of this studio. There was a shelf all around the room, supporting plaster casts which lay there in confusion, most of them under a coating of whitish dust.

Above this shelf here and there a head of Niobe hanging to a nail showed its pathetic bend, a Venus smiled, a hand was unexpectedly thrust out before your eyes, like a beggar's asking alms; then there were anatomical *écorchés,* yellow with smoke, and looking like limbs snatched from coffins; and pictures, drawings, lay-figures, frames without canvas, and canvases without frames, completed the effect, giving the room the characteristic aspect of a studio, a singular mixture of ornamentation and bareness, of poverty and splendor, of care and neglect.

This huge sort of hold, in which everything, even man, looks small, has a behind-the-scenes flavor, here are to be seen old linen, gilt armor, odds and ends of stuffs, and some machinery. But there is something about it as grand as thought: genius and death are there; Diana and Apollo side by side with a skull or a skeleton; beauty and disorder, poetry and reality, gorgeous coloring in shadow, and often a whole drama, but motionless and silent. How symbolical of the artist brain!

At the moment when my story begins the bright sun of July lighted up the studio, and two beams of sunshine shot across its depths, broad bands of diaphanous gold in which the dust-motes glistened. A dozen easels raised their pointed spars, looking like the masts of vessels in a harbor. Several young girls gave life to the scene by the variety of their countenances and attitudes, and the difference in their dress. The strong shadows cast by the green baize blinds, arranged to suit the position of each easel, produced a multitude of contrasts and fascinating effects of chiaroscuro.

This group of girls formed the most attractive picture in the gallery. A fair-haired girl, simply dressed, stood at some distance from her companions, working perseveringly and seeming to foresee misfortune; no one looked at her nor spoke to her; she was the prettiest, the most modest, and the least rich. Two principal groups, divided by a little space, represented two classes of society, two spirits, even in this studio, where rank and fortune ought to have been forgotten.

These young things, sitting or standing, surrounded by their paint-boxes, playing with their brushes or getting them ready, handling their bright-tinted palettes, painting, chattering, laughing, singing, given up to their natural impulses and revealing their true characters, made up a drama unknown to men; this one proud, haughty, capricious, with black hair and beautiful hands, flashed the fire of her eyes at random; that one, light-hearted and heedless, a smile on her lips, her hair chestnut, with delicate white hands, virginal and French, a light nature without a thought of evil, living from hour to hour; another, dreamy, melancholy, pale, her head drooping like a falling blossom; her neighbor, on the contrary, tall, indolent, with Oriental manners, and long, black, melting eyes, speaking little, but lost in thought, and stealing a look at the head of Antinous.

In the midst, like the *Jocoso* of a Spanish comedy, a girl, full of wit and sparkling sallies, stood watching them all with a single glance, and making them laugh; raising a face so full of life it could not but be pretty. She was the leader of the first group of pupils, consisting of the daughters of bankers, lawyers, and merchants—all rich, but exposed to all the minute but stinging disdains freely poured out upon them by the other young girls who belonged to the aristocracy. These were governed by the daughter of a gentleman-usher to the King's private chamber, a vain little thing, as silly as she was vain, and proud of her father's having an office at Court. She aimed at seeming to understand the master's remarks at the first word, and appearing to work by inspired grace; she used an eyeglass, came very much dressed, very

late, and begged her companions not to talk loud. Among this second group might be observed some exquisite shapes and distinguished-looking faces; but their looks expressed but little simplicity. Though their attitudes were elegant and their movements graceful, their faces were lacking in candor, and it was easy to perceive that they belonged to a world where politeness forms the character at an early age, and the abuse of social pleasures kills the feelings and develops selfishness. When the whole party of girl students was complete there were to be seen among them child-like heads, virgin heads of enchanting purity, faces where the parted lips showed virgin teeth, and where a virgin smile came and went. Then the studio suggested not a seraglio, but a group of angels sitting on a cloud in heaven.

It was near noon; Servin had not yet made his appearance. For some days past he had spent most of his time at a studio he had elsewhere, finishing a picture he had there for the exhibition. Suddenly Mlle. Amélie Thirion, the head of the aristocrats in this little assembly, spoke at some length to her neighbor; there was profound silence among the patrician group; the banker faction were equally silent from astonishment, and tried to guess the subject of such a conference. But the secret of the young *ultras* was soon known. Amélie rose, took an easel that stood near her, and moved it to some distance from the "nobility," close to a clumsy partition which divided the studio from a dark closet where broken casts were kept, paintings that the professor had condemned, and, in winter, the firewood. Amélie's proceedings gave rise to a murmur of surprise which did not hinder her from completing the removal by wheeling up to the easel a stool and paint-box, in fact, everything, even a picture by Prudhon, of which a pupil, who had not yet come, was making a copy. After this *coup d'état* the party of the right painted on in silence; but the left talked it over at great length.

"What will Mlle. Piombo say?" asked one of the girls of Mlle. Mathilde Roguin, the oracle of mischief of her group.

"She is not a girl to say much," was the reply. "But fifty years hence she will remember this insult as if she had experienced it the day before, and will find some cruel means of revenge. She is a person I should not like to be at war with."

"The proscription to which those ladies have condemned her is all the more unjust," said another young girl, "because Mlle. Ginevra was very sad the day before yesterday; her father, they say, has just given up his appointment. This will add to her troubles, while she was very good to those young ladies during the Hundred Days. Did she ever say a word that could hurt them? On the contrary, she avoided talking politics. But our *ultras* seem to be prompted by jealousy rather than by party-spirit."

"I have a great mind to fetch Mlle. Piombo's easel and place it by mine," said Mathilde Roguin. She rose, but on second thoughts she sat down again. "With a spirit like Mlle. Ginevra's," said she, "it is impossible to know how

she would take our civility. Let us wait and see."

"*Eccola!*" said the black-eyed girl languidly. In fact, the sound of footsteps coming upstairs was heard in the studio. The words, "Here she comes!" passed from mouth to mouth, and then perfect silence fell.

To understand the full importance of the ostracism carried into effect by Amélie Thirion, it must be told that this scene took place towards the end of the month of July 1815. The second restoration of the Bourbons broke up many friendships which had weathered the turmoil of the first. At this time families, almost always divided among themselves, renewed many of the most deplorable scenes which tarnish the history of all countries at periods of civil or religious struggles. Children, young girls, old men, had caught the monarchical fever from which the Government was suffering. Discord flew in under the domestic roof, and suspicion dyed in gloomy hues the most intimate conversations and actions.

Ginevra de Piombo idolized Napoleon; indeed, how could she have hated him? The Emperor was her fellow-countryman, and her father's benefactor. Baron di Piombo was one of Napoleon's followers who had most efficiently worked to bring him back from Elba. Incapable of renouncing his political faith, nay, eager to proclaim it, Piombo had remained in Paris in the midst of enemies. Hence Ginevra di Piombo was ranked with the "suspicious characters," all the more so because she made no secret of the regret her family felt at the second restoration. The only tears she had perhaps ever shed in her life were wrung from her by the two-fold tidings of Bonaparte's surrender on board the *Bellerophon,* and the arrest of Labédoyère.

The young ladies forming the aristocratic party in the studio belonged to the most enthusiastically Royalist families of Paris. It would be difficult to give any idea of the exaggerated feelings of the time, and of the horror felt towards Bonapartists. However mean and trivial Amélie Thirion's conduct may seem to-day, it was then a very natural demonstration of hatred. Ginevra di Piombo, one of Servin's earliest pupils, had occupied the place of which they wished to deprive her ever since the first day she had come to the studio. The aristocratic group had gradually settled around her; and to turn her out of a place, which in a certain sense belonged to her, was not merely to insult her, but to cause her some pain, for all artists have a predilection for the spot where they work.

However, political hostility had perhaps not much to do with the conduct of this little studio party of the Right. Ginevra di Piombo, the most accomplished of Servin's pupils, was an object of the deepest jealousy. The master professed an equal admiration for the talents and the character of this favorite pupil, who served as the standard of all his comparisons; and, indeed, while it was impossible to explain the ascendancy this young girl exercised over all who were about her, she enjoyed in this small world an influence resembling that of Bonaparte over his soldiers. The aristocratic clique had, some days since, resolved on the over-

throw of this queen; but as no one had been bold enough to repulse the Bonapartist, Mlle. Thirion had just struck the decisive blow so as to make her companions the accomplices of her hatred. Though Ginevra was really beloved by some of the Royalist party, who at home were abundantly lectured on politics, with the tact peculiar to women, they judged it best not to interfere in the quarrel.

On entering, Ginevra was received in perfect silence. Of all the girls who had yet appeared at Servin's studio, she was the handsomest, the tallest, and the most finely made. Her gait had a stamp of dignity and grace which commanded respect. Her face, full of intelligence, seemed radiant, it was so transfused with the animation peculiar to Corsicans, which does not exclude calmness. Her abundant hair, her eyes, and their black lashes told of passion. Though the corners of her mouth were softly drawn and her lips a little too thick, they had the kindly expression which strong people derive from the consciousness of strength. By a singular freak of nature the charm of her features was in some sort belied by a marble forehead stamped with an almost savage pride, and the traditional habits of Corsica. That was the only bond between her and her native land; in every other detail of her person the simplicity and freedom of Lombard beauties were so bewitching, that only in her absence could anyone bear to cause her the smallest pain. She was, indeed, so attractive, that her old father, out of prudence, never allowed her to walk alone to the studio.

The only fault of this really poetic creature came of the very power of such fully developed beauty. She had refused to marry, out of affection for her father and mother, feeling herself necessary to them in their old age. Her taste for painting had taken the place of the passions which commonly agitate women.

"You are all very silent to-day," she said, after coming forward a step or two. "Good-morning, my little Laure," she added in a gentle, caressing tone, as she went up to the young girl who was painting apart from the rest. "That head is very good. The flesh is a little too pink, but it is all capitally drawn."

Laure raised her head, looked at Ginevra much touched, and their faces brightened with an expression of mutual affection. A faint smile gave life to the Italian's lips, but she seemed pensive, and went slowly to her place, carelessly glancing at the drawings and pictures, and saying good-morning to each of the girls of the first group, without observing the unusual curiosity excited by her presence. She might have been a queen amid her Court. She did not observe the deep silence that reigned among the aristocrats, and passed their camp without saying a word. Her absence of mind was so complete that she went to her easel, opened her paint-box, took out her brushes, slipped on her brown linen cuffs, tied her apron, examined her palette, all without thinking, as it seemed, of what she was doing. All the heads of the humbler group were turned to look at her. And if the young ladies of the Thirion faction were less frankly impatient than their companions, their side glances were nevertheless directed to Ginevra.

"She notices nothing," said Mlle. Roguin.

At this moment Ginevra, roused from the meditative attitude in which she had gazed at her canvas, turned her head towards the aristocratic party. With one glance she measured the distance that lay between them, and held her peace.

"It has not occurred to her that they meant to insult her," said Mathilde. "She has neither colored nor turned pale. How provoked those young ladies will be if she likes her new place better than the old one!"—"You are quite apart there, mademoiselle," she added louder, and addressing Ginevra.

The Italian girl affected not to hear, or perhaps she did not hear; she hastily rose, walked rather slowly along the partition which divided the dark closet from the studio, seeming to examine the skylight from which the light fell; and to this she ascribed so much importance that she got upon a chair to fasten the green baize which interfered with the light, a gool deal higher. At this elevation she was on a level with a small crack in the boarding, the real object of her efforts, for the look she cast through it can only be compared with that of a miser discovering Aladdin's treasure. She quickly descended, came back to her place, arranged her picture, affected still to be dissatisfied with the light, pushed a table close to the partition, and placed a chair on it; then she nimbly mounted this scaffolding, and again peeped through the crack. She gave but one look into the closet, which was lighted by a window at the top of the partition, but what she saw impressed her so vividly that she started.

"You will fall, Mlle. Ginevra!" cried Laure.

All the girls turned to look at their imprudent companion, who was tottering. The fear of seeing them gather around her gave her courage; she recovered her strength and her balance, and dancing on the chair, she turned to Laure, and said with some agitation—

"Bah! It is at any rate safer than a throne!"

She quickly arranged the baize, came down, pushed the table and the chair far from the partition, returned to her easel, and made a few more attempts, seeming to try for an effect of light that suited her. Her picture did not really trouble her at all; her aim was to get close to the dark closet by which she placed herself, as she wished, at the end near the door. Then she prepared to set her palette, still in perfect silence. Where she now was she soon heard more distinctly a slight noise which, on the day before, had greatly stirred her curiosity, and sent her young imagination wandering over a wide field of conjecture. She easily recognized it as the deep, regular breathing of the sleeping man whom she had just now seen. Her curiosity was satisfied, but she found herself burdened with an immense responsibility. Through the crack she had caught sight of the Imperial eagle, and on a camp bed, in the dim light, had seen the figure of an officer of the guard. She guessed it all. Servin was sheltering a refugee.

She now trembled lest one of her companions should come to examine her picture, and should hear the unfortunate man breathe, or heave too deep a sign, such as had fallen on her ear during

yesterday's lesson. She resolved to remain near the door, and trust to her wits to cheat the tricks of fate.

"I had better remain here," thought she, "to prevent some disaster, than leave the poor prisoner at the mercy of some giddy prank."

This was the secret of Ginevra's apparent indifference when she found her easel transplanted; she was secretly delighted, since she had been able to satisfy her curiosity in a natural manner; and besides, she was too much absorbed at this moment to inquire into the reason of her exclusion. Nothing is more mortifying to young girls, or, indeed, to anyone, than to see a practical joke, an insult, or a witticism fail of its effect in consequence of the victim's contempt. It would seem that our hatred of an enemy is increased by the height to which he can rise above us.

Ginevra's conduct remained a riddle to all her companions. Her friends and her foes were alike surprised, for she was allowed to have every good quality excepting forgiveness of injuries. Though the opportunities for showing this vice of temper had rarely been offered to Ginevra by the incidents of studio life, the instances she had happened to give of her vindictive spirit and determination had none the less made a deep impression on her companions' minds. After many guesses, Mlle. Roguin finally regarded the Italian's silence as evidence of a magnanimity above all praise; and her party, inspired by her, conceived a plan to humiliate the aristocrats of the studio. They achieved their purpose by a fire of sarcasms directed at the pride and airs of the party of the Right.

Mme. Servin's arrival put an end to this contest of self-assertiveness. Amélie, with the shrewdness which is always coupled with malice, had remarked, watched, and wondered at the excessive absence of mind which hindered Ginevra from hearing the keenly polite dispute of which she was the subject. The revenge which Mlle. Roguin and her followers were wreaking on Mlle. Thirion and her party had thus the fatal effect of setting the young *Ultras* to discover the cause of Ginevra's absorbed silence. The beautiful Italian became the center of observation, and was watched by her friends as much as by her enemies. It is very difficult to hide the slightest excitement, the most trifling feeling, from fifteen idle and inquisitive girls whose mischief and wits crave only for secrets to guess, and intrigues to plot or to baffle, and who can ascribe to a gesture, to a glance, to a word, so many meanings, that they can hardly fail to discover the true one. Thus Ginevra di Piombo's secret was in great peril of being found out.

At this moment Mme. Servin's presence produced a diversion in the drama that was being obscurely played at the bottom of these young hearts; while its sentiments, its ideas, its development, were expressed by almost allegorical words, by significant looks, by gestures, and even by silence, often more emphatic than speech.

The moment Mme. Servin came into the studio her eyes turned to the door by which Ginevra was standing. Under the present circumstances this look was not lost. If at first none of the maidens observed it, Mlle. Thirion remembered it afterward, and accounted for the suspiciousness, the alarm, and mystery

which gave a hunted expression to Mme. Servin's eyes.

"Mesdemoiselles," she said, "M. Servin cannot come today." Then she paid some little compliment to each pupil, all of them welcoming her in the girlish, caressing way which lies as much in the voice and eyes as in actions. She immediately went to Ginevra under an impulse of uneasiness, which she vainly tried to conceal. The Italian and the painter's wife exchanged friendly nods, and then stood in silence, one painting, the other watching her paint. The officer's breathing was easily audible, but Mme. Servin could take no notice of it; and her dissimulation was so complete that Ginevra was tempted to accuse her of willful deafness. At this moment the stranger turned on the bed. The Italian girl looked Mme. Servin steadily in the face, and, without betraying the smallest agitation, the lady said, "Your copy is as fine as the original. If I had to choose, I should really be puzzled."

"M. Servin has not let his wife into the secret of this mystery," thought Ginevra, who, after answering the young wife with a gentle smile of incredulity, sang a snatch of some national canzonetta to cover any sounds the prisoner might make.

It was so unusual to hear the studious Italian sing, that all the girls looked at her in surprise. Later this incident served as evidence to the charitable supposition of hatred. Mme. Servin soon went away, and the hours of study ended without further event. Ginevra let all her companions leave, affecting to work on; but she unconscioulsy betrayed her wish to be alone, for as the pupils made ready to go she looked at them with ill-disguised impatience. Mlle. Thirion, who within these few hours had become a cruel foe to the young girl, who was her superior in everything, guessed by the instinct of hatred that her rival's affected industry covered a mystery. She had been struck more than once by the attention with which Ginevra seemed to be listening to a sound no one else could hear. The expression she now read in the Italian's eyes was as a flash of illumination. She was the last to leave, and went in on her way down to see Mme. Servin, with whom she stayed a few minutes. Then, pretending that she had forgotten her bag, she very softly went upstairs again to the studio, and discovered Ginevra at the top of a hastily constructed scaffolding, so lost in contemplation of the unknown soldier that she did not hear the light sound of her companion's footsteps. It is true that Amélie walked on eggs—to use a phrase of Walter Scott's; she retired to the door and coughed. Ginevra started, turned her head, saw her enemy, and colored; then she quickly untied the blind, to mislead her as to her purpose, and came down. After putting away her paint-box, she left the studio, carrying stamped upon her heart the image of a man's head as charming as the Endymion, Girodet's masterpiece, which she had copied a few days previously.

"So young a man, and proscribed! Who can he be?—for it is not Marshal Ney."

These two sentences are the simplest expression of all the ideas which Ginevra turned over in her mind during two days. The next day but one, notwithstanding her hurry to be first at the

painting gallery, she found that Mlle. Thirion had already come in a carriage. Ginevra and her enemy watched each other for some time, but each kept her countenance impenetrable by the other. Amélie had seen the stranger's handsome face; but happily, and at the same time unhappily, the eagles and the uniform were not within the range of her eye through the crack. She lost herself in conjecture. Suddenly Servin came in, much earlier than usual.

"Mlle. Ginevra," said he, after casting an eye around the gallery, "why have you placed yourself there? The light is bad. Come nearer to these young ladies, and lower your blind a little."

Then he sat down by Laure, whose work deserved his most lenient criticism.

"Well done!" he exclaimed, "this head is capitally done. You will be a second Ginevra."

The master went from easel to easel, blaming, flattering, and jesting; and making himself, as usual, more feared for his jests than for his reproofs.

The Italian had not obeyed his wishes; she remained at her post with the firm intention of staying there. She took out a sheet of paper and began to sketch in sepia the head of the unhappy refugee. A work conceived of with passion always bears a particular stamp. The faculty of giving truth to a rendering of nature or of a thought constitutes genius, and passion can often take its place. Thus in the circumstances in which Ginevra found herself, either the intuition she owed to her memory, which had been deeply struck, or perhaps necessity, the mother of greatness, lent her a supernatural flash of talent. The officer's head was thrown off on the paper with an inward trembling that she ascribed to fear, and which a physiologist would have recognized as the fever of inspiration. From time to time she stole a furtive glance at her companions, so as to be able to hide the sketch in case of any indiscretion on their part. But in spite of her sharp lookout, there was a moment when she failed to perceive that her relentless enemy, under the shelter of a huge portfolio, had turned her eyeglass on the mysterious drawing. Mlle. Thirion, recognizing the refugee's features, raised her head suddenly, and Ginevra slipped away the sheet of paper.

"Why do you stay there, in spite of my opinion, mademoiselle?" the professor gravely asked Ginevra.

The girl hastily turned her easel so that no one could see her sketch, and said, in an agitated voice, as she showed it to her master—

"Don't you think with me that this is a better light? May I not stay where I am?"

Servin turned pale. As nothing can escape the keen eyes of hatred, Mlle. Thirion threw herself, so to speak, into the excited feelings that agitated the professor and his pupil.

"You are right," said Servin. "But you will soon know more than I do," he added, with a forced laugh. There was a silence, during which the master looked at the head of the officer. "This is a masterpiece, worthy of Salvator Rosa!" he exclaimed, with an artist's vehemence.

At this exclamation all the young people rose, and Mlle. Thirion came forward with the swiftness of a tiger springing on its prey. At this instant the prisoner, roused by the turmoil, woke

up. Ginevra overset her stool, spoke a few incoherent sentences, and began to laugh; but she had folded the portrait in half and thrown it into a portfolio before her terrible enemy could see it. The girls crowded round the easel; Servin enlarged in a loud voice on the beauties of the copy on which his favorite pupil was just now engaged; and all the party were cheated by this stratagem, excepting Amélie, who placed herself behind her companions and tried to open the portfolio into which she had seen the sketch put. Ginevra seized it and set it in front of her without a word, and the two girls gazed at each other in silence.

"Come, young ladies, to your places!" said Servin. "If you want to know as much as Mlle. di Piombo, you must not be always talking of fashions and balls, and trifling so much."

When the girls had all returned to their easels, the master sat down by Ginevra.

"Was it not better that this mystery should be discovered by me than by anyone else?" said the Italian girl in a low tone.

"Yes," answered the painter. "You are patriotic; but even if you had not been, you are still the person to whom I should intrust it."

The master and pupil understood each other, and Ginevra was not now afraid to ask, "Who is he?"

"An intimate friend of Labédoyère's; the man who, next to the unfortunate colonel, did most to effect a junction between the 7th and the Grenadiers of Elba. He was a major in the Guards, and has just come back from Waterloo."

"Why have you not burnt his uniform and shako, and put him into civilian dress?" asked Ginevra vehemently.

"Some clothes are to be brought for him this evening."

"You should have shut up the studio for a few days."

"He is going away."

"Does he wish to die?" said the girl. "Let him stay with you during these first days of the storm. Paris is the only place in France where a man may be safely hidden. Is he a friend of yours?" she added.

"No. He has no claim to my regard but his misfortunes. This is how he fell into my hands; my father-in-law, who had rejoined his regiment during this campaign, met the poor young man, and saved him very cleverly from those who have arrested Labédoyère. He wanted to defend him, like a madman!"

"And do you call him so!" cried Ginevra, with a glance of surprise at the painter, who did not speak for a moment.

"My father-in-law is too closely watched to be able to keep anyone in his house," he went on. "He brought him here by night last week. I hoped to hide him from every eye by keeping him in this corner, the only place in the house where he can be safe."

"If I can be of any use, command me," said Ginevra. "I know Marshal Feltre."

"Well, we shall see," replied the painter.

This conversation had lasted too long not to be remarked by all the other pupils. Servin left Ginevra, came back to each easel, and gave such long lessons that he was still upstairs when the clock struck the hour at which his pupils usually left.

"You have forgotten your bag, mademoiselle," cried the professor, running after the young lady, who condescended to act the spy to gratify her hatred.

The inquisitive pupil came back for the bag, expressing some surprise at her own carelessness; but Servin's attention was to her additional proof of the existence of a mystery which was undoubtedly a serious one. She had already planned what should follow, and could say, like the Abbé Vertot, "I have laid my siege." She ran downstairs noisily, and violently slammed the door leading to Servin's rooms, that it might be supposed she had gone out; but she softly went upstairs again, and hid behind the door of the studio.

When the painter and Ginevra supposed themselves alone, he tapped in a particular manner at the door of the attic, which at once opened on its rusty, creaking hinges. The Italian girl saw a tall and well-built youth, whose Imperial uniform set her heart beating. The officer carried his arm in a sling, and his pale face told of acute suffering. He started at seeing her, a stranger. Amélie, who could see nothing, was afraid to stay any longer; but she had heard the creaking of the door, and that was enough. She silently stole away.

"Fear nothing," said the painter. "Mademoiselle is the daughter of the Emperor's most faithful friend, the Baron di Piombo."

The young officer felt no doubt of Ginevra's loyalty when once he had looked at her.

"You are wounded?" she said.

"Oh, it is nothing, mademoiselle; the cut is healing."

At this moment the shrill and piercing tones of men in the street came up to the studio, crying out, "This is the sentence which condemns to death——" All three shuddered. The soldier was the first to hear a name at which he turned pale.

"Labédoyère!" he exclaimed, dropping on to a stool.

They looked at each other in silence. Drops of sweat gathered on the young man's livid brow; with a gesture of despair he clutched the black curls of his hair, resting his elbow on Ginevra's easel.

"After all," said he, starting to his feet, "Labédoyère and I knew what we were doing. We knew the fate that awaited us if we triumphed or if we failed. He is dying for the cause, while I am in hiding——"

He hurried towards the studio door; but Ginevra, more nimble than he, rushed forward and stopped the way.

"Can you restore the Emperor?" she said. "Do you think you can raise the giant again, when he could not keep his feet?"

"What then is to become of me?" said the refugee, addressing the two friends whom chance had sent him. "I have not a relation in the world; Labédoyère was my friend and protector, I am now alone; to-morrow I shall be exiled or condemned; I have never had any fortune but my pay; I spent my last crown-piece to come and snatch Labédoyère from death and get him away. Death is an obvious necessity to me. When a man is determined to die, he must know how to sell his head to the executioner. I was thinking just now that an honest man's life is well worth that of two traitors, and that a dagger-

thrust, judiciously placed, may give one immortality."

This passion of despair frightened the painter, and even Ginevra, who fully understood the young man. The Italian admired the beautiful head and the delightful voice, of which the accents of rage scarcely disguised the sweetness; then she suddenly dropped balm on all the hapless man's wounds.

"Monsieur!" said she, "as to your pecuniary difficulties, allow me to offer you the money I myself have saved. My father is rich; I am his only child; he loves me, and I am quite sure he will not blame me. Have no scruples in accepting it; our wealth comes from the Emperor, we have nothing which is not the bounty of his munificence. Is it not gratitude to help one of his faithful soldiers? So take this money with as little ceremony as I make about offering it. It is only money," she added in a scornful tone. "Then, as to friends —you will find friends!" And she proudly raised her head, while her eyes shone with unwonted brilliancy. "The head which must fall to-morrow—the mark of a dozen guns—saves yours," she went on. "Wait till this storm is over, and you can take service in a foreign land if you are not forgotten, or in the French army if you are."

In the comfort offered by a woman there is a delicacy of feeling which always has a touch of something motherly, something far-seeing and complete; but when such words of peace and hope are seconded by grace of gesture, and the eloquence which comes from the heart, above all, when the comforter is beautiful, it is hard for a young man to resist. The young colonel inhaled love by every sense. A faint flush tinged his white cheeks, and his eyes lost a little of the melancholy that dimmed them as he said, in a strange tone of voice, "You are an angel of goodness!—But, Labédoyère!" he added, "Labédoyère!"

At this cry they all three looked at each other, speechless, and understood each other. They were friends, not of twenty minutes, but of twenty years.

"My dear fellow," said Servin, "can you save him?"

"I can avenge him."

Ginevra was thrilled. Though the stranger was handsome, his appearance had not moved her. The gentle pity that women find in their heart for suffering which is not ignoble had, in Ginevra, stifled every other emotion; but to hear a cry of revenge, to find in this fugitive an Italian soul and Corsican magnanimity! This was too much for her; she gazed at the officer with respectful emotion, which powerfully stirred her heart. It was the first time a man had ever made her feel so strongly. Like all women, it pleased her to imagine that the soul of this stranger must be in harmony with the remarkable beauty of his features and the fine proportions of his figure, which she admired as an artist. Led by chance curiosity to pity, from pity to eager interest, she now from interest had reached sensations so strong and deep that she thought it rash to remain there any longer.

"Till to-morrow," she said, leaving her sweetest smile with the officer, to console him.

As he saw that smile, which threw a new light, as it were, on Ginevra's face, the stranger for a moment forgot all else.

"To-morrow," he repeated sadly. "To-morrow, Labédoyère——"

Ginevra turned to him and laid a finger on her lips, looking at him as though she would say, "Be calm, be prudent."

Then the young man exclaimed: *"O Dio! Chi non vorrei vivere dopo averla veduta!"* "O God! who would not live after having seen her!" The peculiar accent with which he spoke the words startled Ginevra.

"You are a Corsican!" she exclaimed, coming back to him, her heart beating with gladness.

"I was born in Corsica," he replied; "but I was taken to Genoa when very young; and, as soon as I was of age to enter the army, I enlisted."

The stranger's handsome person, the transcendent charm he derived from his attachment to the Emperor, his wound, his misfortunes, even his danger, all vanished before Ginevra's eyes, or rather all were fused in one new and exquisite sentiment. This refugee was a son of Corsica, and spoke its beloved tongue. In a minute the girl stood motionless, spellbound by a magical sensation. She saw before her eyes a living picture to which a combination of human feeling and chance lent dazzling hues. At Servin's invitation the officer had taken his seat on an ottoman, the painter had untied the string which supported his guest's arm, and was now undoing the bandages in order to dress the wound. Ginevra shuddered as she saw the long wide gash, made by a saber-cut, on the young man's forearm, and gave a little groan. The stranger looked up at her and began to smile. There was something very touching that went to the soul in Servin's attentive care as he removed the lint and touched the tender flesh, while the wounded man's face, though pale and sickly, expressed pleasure rather than suffering as he looked at the young girl.

An artist could not help admiring the antithesis of sentiments, and the contrast of color between the whiteness of the linen and the bare arm and the officer's blue and red coat. Soft dusk had now fallen on the studio, but a last sunbeam shone in one the spot where the refugee was sitting, in such a way that his pale, noble face, his black hair, his uniform were all flooded with light. This simple effect the superstitious Italian took for an omen of good luck. The stranger seemed to her a celestial messenger who had spoken to her in the language of her native land, and put her under the spell of childish memories; while in her heart a feeling had birth as fresh and pure as her first age of innocence. In a very short instant she stood pensive, lost in infinite thought; then she blushed to have betrayed her absence of mind, exchanged a swift, sweet look with the officer, and made her escape, seeing him still.

The next day there was no painting lesson; Ginevra could come to the studio, and the prisoner could be with his fellow-countrywoman. Servin, who had a sketch to finish, allowed the officer to sit there while he played guardian to the two young people, who frequently spoke in Corsican. The poor soldier told of his sufferings during the retreat from Moscow; for, at the age of nineteen, he had found himself at the passage of the Beresina, alone of all his regiment, having lost in his comrades

the only men who could care for him, an orphan. He described, in words of fire, the great disaster of Waterloo.

His voice was music to the Italian girl. Brought up in Corsican ways, Ginevra was, to some extent, a child of nature; falsehood was unknown to her, and she gave herself up without disguise to her impressions, owning them, or rather letting them be seen without the trickery, the mean and calculating vanity of the Parisian girl. During this day she remained more than once, her palette in one hand, a brush in the other, while the brush was undipped in the colors on the palette; her eyes fixed on the officer's face, her lips slightly parted, she sat listening, ready to lay on the touch which was not given. She was not surprised to find such sweetness in the young man's eyes, for she felt her own soften in spite of her determination to keep them severe and cold. Thus, for hours, she painted with resolute attention, not raising her head because he was there watching her work. The first time he sat down to gaze at her in silence, she said to him in an agitated voice, after a long pause, "Does it amuse you, then, to look on at painting?"

That day she learnt that his name was Luigi. Before they parted it was agreed that if any important political events should occur on the days when the studio was open, Ginevra was to inform him by singing in an undertone certain Italian airs.

On the following day Mlle. Thirion informed all her companions, as a great secret, that Ginevra di Piombo had a lover—a young man who came during the hours devoted to lessons—to hide in the dark closet of the studio.

"You, who take her part," said she to Mlle. Roguin, "watch her well, and you will see how she spends her time."

So Ginevra was watched with diabolical vigilance. Her songs were listened to, her glances spied. At moments when she believed that no one saw her, a dozen eyes were incessantly centered on her. And being forewarned, the girls interpreted in their true sense the agitations which passed across the Italian's radiant face, and her snatches of song, and the attention with which she listened to the muffled sounds which she alone could hear through the partition.

By the end of a week, only Laure, of the fifteen students, had resisted the temptation to scrutinize Louis through the crack in the panel, or, by an instinct of weakness, still defended the beautiful Corsican girl. Mlle. Roguin wanted to make her wait on the stairs at the hour when they all left, to prove to her the intimacy between Ginevra and the handsome young man, by finding them together; but she refused to condescend to an espionage which curiosity could not justify, and thus became an object of general reprobation.

Ere long the daughter of the gentleman-usher thought it unbecoming in her to work in the studio of a painter whose opinions were tained with patriotism or Bonapartism—which at that time were regarded as one and the same thing; so she came no more to Servin's. Though Amélie forgot Ginevra, the evil she had sown bore fruit. Insensibly, by chance, for gossip, or out of prudery, the other damsels informed their mothers of the strange adventure in progress at the studio. One day Mathilde Roguin did not come; the next time another wa

absent; at last the three or four pupils, who had still remained, came no more. Ginevra and her little friend, Mlle. Laure, were for two or three days the sole occupants of the deserted studio.

The Italian did not observe the isolation in which she was left, and did not even wonder at the cause of her companions' absence. Having devised the means of communicating with Louis, she lived in the studio as in a delightful retreat, secluded in the midst of the world, thinking only of the officer, and of the dangers which threatened him. This young creature, though sincerely admiring those noble characters who would not be false to their political faith, urged Louis to submit at once to royal authority, in order to keep him in France, while Louis refused to submit, that he might not have to leave his hiding-place.

If, indeed, passions only have their birth and grow up under the influence of romantic causes, never had so many circumstances concurred to link two beings by one feeling. Ginevra's regard for Louis, and his for her, thus made greater progress in a month than a fashionable friendship can make in ten years in a drawing-room. Is not adversity the touchstone of character? Hence Ginevra could really appreciate Louis, and know him, and they soon felt a reciprocal esteem. Ginevra, who was older than Louis, found it sweet to be courted by a young man already so great, so tried by fortune, who united the experience of a man with the graces of youth. Louis, on his part, felt unspeakable delight in allowing himself to be apparently protected by a girl of five-and-twenty. Was it not a proof of love? The union in Ginevra of pride and sweetness, of strength and weakness, had an irresistible charm; Louis was indeed completely her slave. In short, they were already so deeply in love, that they felt no need either to deny it to themselves, nor to tell it.

One day, towards evening, Ginevra heard the signal agreed on—Louis tapped on the woodwork with a pin, so gently as to make no more noise than a spider attaching its thread—thus asking if he might come out. She glanced round the studio, did not see little Laure, and answered the summons; but as the door was opened, Louis caught sight of the girl, and hastily retreated. Ginevra, much surprised, looked about her, saw Laure, and going up to her easel, said, "You are staying very late, dear. And that head seems to me finished; there is only a reflected light to put in on that lock of hair."

"It would be very kind of you," said Laure, in a tremulous voice, "if you would correct this copy for me; I should have something of your doing to keep."

"Of course I will," said Ginevra, sure of thus dismissing her. "I thought," she added, as she put in a few light touches, "that you had a long way to go home from the studio."

"Oh! Ginevra, I am going away for good," cried the girl, sadly.

"You are leaving M. Servin?" asked the Italian, not seeming affected by her words, as she would have been a month since.

"Have you not noticed, Ginevra, that for some time there has been nobody here but you and me?"

"It is true," replied Ginevra, suddenly struck as by a reminiscence. "Are they

ill, or going to be married, or are all their fathers employed now at the palace?"

"They have all left M. Servin," said Laure.

"And why?"

"On your account, Ginevra."

"Mine!" repeated the Corsican, rising, with a threatening brow, and a proud sparkle in her eyes.

"Oh, do not be angry, dear Ginevra," Laure piteously exclaimed. "But my mother wishes that I should leave too. All the young ladies said that you had an intrigue; that M. Servin had lent himself to allowing a young man who loves you to stay in the dark closet; but I never believed these calumnies, and did not tell my mother. Last evening Mme. Roguin met my mother at a ball, and asked her whether she still sent me here. When mamma said Yes, she repeated all those girls' tales. Mamma scolded me well; she declared I must have known it all, and that I had failed in the confidence of a daughter in her mother by not telling her. Oh, my dear Ginevra, I, who always took you for my model, how grieved I am not to be allowed to stay on with you——"

"We shall meet again in the world; young women get married," said Ginevra.

"When they are rich," replied Laure.

"Come to see me, my father has wealth——"

"Ginevra," Laure went on, much moved, "Mme. Roguin and my mother are coming to-morrow to see M. Servin, and complain of his conduct. At least let him be prepared."

A thunderbolt falling at her feet would have astonished Ginevra less than this announcement.

"What could it matter to them?" she innocently asked.

"Everyone thinks it very wrong. Mamma says it is quite improper."

"And you, Laure, what do you think about it?"

The girl looked at Ginevra and their hearts met. Laure could no longer restrain her tears; she threw herself on her friend's neck and kissed her. At this moment Servin came in.

"Mlle. Ginevra," he said, enthusiastically, "I have finished my picture, it is being varnished.—But what is the matter? All the young ladies are making holiday, it would seem, or are gone into the country."

Laure wiped away her tears, took leave of Servin, and went away.

"The studio has been deserted for some days," said Ginevra, "and those young ladies will return no more."

"Pooh!"

"Nay, do not laugh," said Ginevra, "listen to me. I am the involuntary cause of your loss of repute."

The artist smiled, and said, interrupting his pupil, "My repute? But in a few days my picture will be exhibited."

"It is not your talent that is in question," said the Italian girl; "but your morality. The young ladies have spread a report that Louis is shut up here, and that you—lent yourself to our love-making."

"There is some truth in that, mademoiselle," replied the professor. "The girls' mothers are airified prudes," he went on. "If they had but come to me, everything would have been explained.

But what do I care for such things? Life is too short!"

And the painter snapped his fingers in the air.

Louis, who had heard part of the conversation, came out of his cupboard.

"You are losing all your pupils," he cried, "and I shall have been your ruin!"

The artist took his hand and Ginevra's, and joined them. "Will you marry each other, my children?" he asked, with touching bluntness. They both looked down, and their silence was their first mutual confession of love. "Well," said Servin, "and you will be happy, will you not? Can anything purchase such happiness as that of two beings like you?"

"I am rich," said Ginevra; "if you will allow me to indemnify you——"

"Indemnify!" Servin broke in. "Why, as soon as it is known that I have been the victim of a few little fools, and that I have sheltered a fugitive, all the Liberals in Paris will send me their daughters! Perhaps I shall be in your debt then."

Louis grasped his protector's hand, unable to speak a word; but at last he said, in a broken voice, "To you I shall owe all my happiness."

"Be happy; I unite you," said the painter with comic unction, laying his hands on the heads of the lovers.

This pleasantry put an end to their emotional mood. They looked at each other, and all three laughed. The Italian girl wrung Louis's hand with a passionate grasp, and with a simple impulse worthy of her Corsican traditions.

"Ah, but, my dear children," said Servin, "you fancy that now everything will go on swimmingly? Well, you are mistaken." They looked at him in amazement.

"Do not be alarmed; I am the only person inconvenienced by your giddy behavior. But Mme. Servin is the pink of propriety, and I really do not know how we shall settle matters with her."

"Heavens! I had forgotten. Tomorrow Mme. Roguin and Laure's mother are coming to you——"

"I understand!" said the painter, interrupting her.

"But you can justify yourself," said the girl, with a toss of her head of emphatic pride. "M. Louis," and she turned to him with an arch look, "has surely no longer an antipathy for the King's Government?—Well, then," she went on, after seeing him smile, "tomorrow morning I shall address a petition to one of the most influential persons at the Ministry of War, a man who can refuse the Baron di Piombo's daughter nothing. We will obtain a tacit pardon for Captain Louis—for *they* will not recognize your grade as colonel. And you," she added, speaking to Servin, "may annihilate the mammas of my charitable young companions by simply telling them the truth."

"You are an angel!" said Servin.

While this scene was going on at the studio, Ginevra's father and mother were impatiently expecting her return.

"It is six o'clock, and Ginevra is not yet home," said Bartolomeo.

"She was never so late before," replied his wife.

The old people look at each other with all the signs of very unusual anxiety. Bartolomeo, too much excited to sit still, rose and paced the room twice, briskly enough for a man of seventy-seven. Thanks to a strong constitution, he had changed but little since

the day of his arrival at Paris, and tall as he was, he was still upright. His hair, thin and white now, had left his head bald, a broad and bossy skull which gave token of great strength and firmness. His face, deeply furrowed, had grown full and wide, with the pale complexion that inspires veneration. The fires of a passionate nature still lurked in the unearthly glow of his eyes, and the brows, which were not quite white, preserved their terrible mobility. The aspect of the man was severe, but it could be seen that Bartolomeo had the right to be so. His kindness and gentleness were known only to his wife and daughter. In his official position, or before strangers, he never set aside the majesty which time had lent to his appearance; and his habit of knitting those thick brows, of setting every line in his face, and assuming a Napoleonic fixity of gaze, made him seem as cold as marble.

In the course of his political life he had been so generally feared that he was thought unsociable; but it is not difficult to find the causes of such a reputation. Piombo's life, habits, and fidelity were a censure on most of the courtiers. Notwithstanding the secret missions intrusted to his discretion, which to any other man would have proved lucrative, he had not more than thirty thousand francs a year in Government securities. And when we consider the low price of stock under the Empire, and Napoleon's liberality to those of his faithful adherents who knew how to ask, it is easy to perceive that the Baron di Piombo was a man of stern honesty; he owed his Baron's plumage only to the necessity of bearing a title when sent by Napoleon to a foreign Court.

Bartolomeo had always professed implacable hatred of the traitors whom Napoleon had gathered about him, believing he could win them over by his victories. It was he—so it was said—who took three steps towards the door of the Emperor's room, after advising him to get rid of three men then in France, on the day before he set out on his famous and brilliant campaign of 1814. Since the second return of the Bourbons, Bartolomeo had ceased to wear the ribbon of the Legion of Honor. No man ever offered a finer image of the old Republicans, the incorruptible supporters of the Empire, who survived as the living derelicts of the two most vigorous Governments the world has perhaps ever seen. If Baron di Piombo had displeased some courtiers, Daru Drouot, Carnot were his friends. And, indeed, since Waterloo, he cared no more about other political figures than for the puffs of smoke he blew from his cigar.

With the moderate sum which *Madame*, Napoleon's mother, had paid him for his estates in Corsica, Bartolomeo di Piombo had acquired the old Hôtel de Portenduère, in which he made no alterations. Living almost always in official residences at the cost of the Government, he had resided in this mansion only since the catastrophe of Fontainebleau. Like all simple folks of lofty character, the Baron and his wife cared nothing for external splendor; they still used the old furniture they had found in the house. The reception rooms of this dwelling, lofty, gloomy, and bare, the huge mirrors set in old gilt frames almost black with age, the furniture from the time of Louis XIV., were in

keeping with Bartolomeo and his wife—figures worthy of antiquity. Under the Empire, and during the Hundred Days, while holding offices that brought handsome salaries, the old Corsican had kept house in grand style, but rather to do honor to his position than with a view to display.

His life, and that of his wife and daughter, were so frugal, so quiet, that their modest fortune sufficed for their needs. To them their child Ginevra outweighed all the riches on earth. And when, in May 1814, Baron di Piombo resigned his place, dismissed his household, and locked his stable-doors, Ginevra, as simple and unpretentious as her parents, had not a regret. Like all great souls, she found luxury in strength of feeling, as she sought happiness in solitude and work.

And these three loved each other too much for the externals of life to have any value in their eyes. Often—and especially since Napoleon's second and fearful fall—Bartolomeo and his wife spent evenings of pure delight in listening to Ginevra as she played the piano or sang. To them there was an immense mystery of pleasure in their daughter's presence, in her lightest word; they followed her with their eyes with tender solicitude; they heard her step in the court-yard, however lightly she trod. Like lovers, they would all three sit silent for hours, hearing, better than in words, the eloquence of each other's soul. This deep feeling, the very life of the two old people, filled all their thoughts. Not three lives were here, but one, which, like the flame on a hearth, burnt up in three tongues of fire.

Though now and then memories of Napoleon's bounty and misfortunes, or the politics of the day, took the place of their constant preoccupation, they could talk of them without breaking their community of thought. For did not Ginevra share their political passions? What could be more natural than the eagerness with which they withdrew into the heart of their only child? Until now the business of public life had absorbed Baron di Piombo's energies; but in resigning office the Corsican felt the need of throwing his energy into the last feeling that was left to him; and, besides the tie that bound a father and mother to their daughter, there was perhaps unknown to these three despotic spirits, a powerful reason in the fanaticism of their reciprocal devotion; their love was undivided; Ginevra's whole heart was given to her father, as Piombo's was to her; and certainly, if it is true that we are more closely attached to one another by our faults than by our good qualities, Ginevra responded wonderfully to all her father's passions. Herein lay the single defect of this threefold existence. Ginevra was wholly given over to her vindictive impulses, carried away by them, as Bartolomeo had been in his youth. The Corsican delighted in encouraging these savage emotions in his daughter's heart, exactly as a lion teaches his whelps to spring on their prey. But as this apprenticeship to revenge could only be carried out under the parental roof, Ginevra never forgave her father anything; he always had to succumb. Piombo regarded these factitious quarrels as mere childishness, but the child thus acquired a habit of domineering over her parents. In the midst of these tempests which Bartolomeo loved to

raise, a tender word, a look, was enough ot soothe their angry spirits, and they were never so near kissing as when threatening wrath.

However, from the age of about five, Ginevra, growing wiser than her father, constantly avoided these scenes. Her faithful nature, her devotion, the affection which governed all her thoughts, and her admirable good sense, had got the better of her rages; still a great evil had resulted: Ginevra lived with her father and mother on a footing of equality which is always disastrous.

To complete the picture of all the changes that had happened to these three persons since their arrival in Paris, Piombo and his wife, people of no education, had allowed Ginevra to study as she would. Following her girlish fancy, she had tried and given up everything, returning to each idea, and abandoning each in turn, until painting had become her ruling passion; she would have been perfect if her mother had been capable of directing her studies, of enlightening and harmonizing her natural gifts. Her faults were the outcome of the pernicious training that the old Corsican had delighted to give her.

After making the floor creak for some minutes under his feet, the old man rang the bell. A servant appeared.

"Go to meet Mlle. Ginevra," said the master.

"I have always been sorry that we have no longer a carriage for her," said the Baroness.

"She would not have one," replied Piombo, looking at his wife; and she, accustomed for twenty years to obedience as her part, cast down her eyes.

Tall, thin, pale, and wrinkled, and now past seventy, the Baroness was exactly like the old woman whom Schnetz introduces into the Italian scenes of his genre pictures; she commonly sat so silent that she might have been taken for a second Mrs. Shandy; but a word, a look, a gesture would betray that her feelings had all the vigor and freshness of youth. Her dress, devoid of smartness, was often devoid of taste. She usually remained passive, sunk in an armchair, like a Sultan, a *valideh,* waiting for, or admiring Ginevra—her pride and life. Her daughter's beauty, dress, and grace seemed to have become her own. All was well with her if Ginevra were content. Her hair had turned white, and a few locks were visible above her furrowed brow, and at the side of her withered cheeks.

"For about a fortnight now," said she, "Ginevra has been coming in late."

"Jean will not go fast enough," cried the impatient old man, crossing over the breast of his blue coat; he snatched up his hat, crammed it on to his head, and was off.

"You will not get far," his wife called after him.

In fact, the outer gate opened and shut, and the old mother heard Ginevra's steps in the courtyard. Bartolomeo suddenly reappeared, carrying his daughter in triumph, while she struggled in his arms.

"Here she is! La Ginevra, la Ginevrettina, la Ginevrina, la Ginevrola, la Ginevretta, la Ginevra bella!"

"Father! you are hurting me!"

Ginevra was immediately set down with a sort of respect. She nodded her head with a graceful gesture to reassure her mother, who was alarmed, and to

convey that it had been only an excuse. Then the Baroness's pale, dull face regained a little color, and even a kind of cheerfulness. Piombo rubbed his hands together extremely hard—the most certain symptom of gladness; he had acquired the habit at Court when seeing Napoleon in a rage with any of his generals or ministers who served him ill, or who had committed some blunder. When once the muscles of his face were relaxed, the smallest line in his forehead expressed benevolence. These two old folks at this moment were exactly like drooping plants, which are restored to life by a little water after a long drought.

"Dinner, dinner!" cried the Baron, holding out his hand to Ginevra, whom he addressed as Signora Piombellina, another token of good spirits, to which his daughter replied with a smile.

"By the way," said Piombo, as they rose from table, "do you know that your mother has remarked that for a month past you have stayed at the studio much later than usual? Painting before parents, it would seem."

"Oh, dear father——"

"Ginevra is preparing some surprise for us, no doubt," said the mother.

"You are going to bring me a picture of your painting?" cried the Corsican, clapping his hands.

"Yes; I am very busy at the studio," she replied.

"What ails you, Ginevra? you are so pale," asked her mother.

"No!" exclaimed the girl, with a resolute gesture. "No! it shall never be said that Ginevra Piombo ever told a lie in her life."

On hearing this strange exclamation, Piombo and his wife looked at their daughter with surprise.

"I love a young man," she added, in a broken voice. Then, not daring to look at her parents, her heavy eyelids drooped as if to veil the fire in her eyes.

"Is he a prince?" asked her father ironically; but his tone of voice made both the mother and daughter tremble.

"No, father," she modestly repied, "he is a young man of no fortune——"

"Then is he so handsome?"

"He is unfortunate."

"What is he?"

"As a comrade of Labédoyères he was outlawed, homeless; Servin hid him, and——"

"Servin is a good fellow, and did well," cried Piombo. "But you, daughter, have done ill to love any man but your father——"

"Love is not within my control," said Ginevra gently.

"I had flattered myself," said her father, "that my Ginevra would be faithful to me till my death; that my care and her mother's would be all she would have known; that our tenderness would never meet with a rival affection in her heart; that——"

"Did I ever reproach you for your fanatical devotion to Napoleon?" said Ginevra. "Have you never loved anyone but me? Have you not been away on embassies for months at a time? Have I not borne your absence bravely? Life has necessities to which we must yield."

"Ginevra!"

"No, you do not love me for my own sake, and your reproaches show intolerable selfishness."

"And you accuse your father's love!" cried Piombo with flaming looks.

"Father, I will never accuse you," replied Ginevra, more gently than her trembling mother expected. "You have right on the side of your egoism, as I have right on the side of my love. Heaven is my witness that no daughter ever better fulfilled her duty to her parents. I have never known anything but love and happiness in what many daughters regard as obligations. Now, for fifteen years, I have never been anywhere but under your protecting wing, and it has been a very sweet delight to me to charm your lives. But am I then ungrateful in giving myself up to the joy of loving, and in wishing for a husband to protect me after you?"

"So you balance accounts with your father, Ginevra!" said the old man in ominous tones.

There was a frightful pause; no one dared to speak. Finally, Bartolomeo broke the silence by exclaiming in a heartrending voice: "Oh, stay with us; stay with your old father! I could not bear to see you love a man. Ginevra, you will not have long to wait for your liberty——"

"But, my dear father, consider; we shall not leave you, we shall be two to love you; you will know the man to whose care you will bequeath me. You will be doubly loved by me and by him—by him, being part of me, and by me who am wholly he."

"Oh, Ginevra, Ginevra!" cried the Corsican, clinching his fists, "why were you not married when Napoleon had accustomed me to the idea, and introduced dukes and counts as your suitors."

"They only loved me to order," said the young girl. "Besides, I did not wish to leave you; and they would have taken me away with them."

"You do not wish to leave us alone," said Piombo, "but if you marry you isolate us. I know you, my child, you will love us no more. Elisa," he added, turning to his wife, who sat motionless and, as it were, stupefied; "we no longer have a daughter; she wants to be married."

The old man sat down, after raising his hands in the air as though to invoke God; then he remained bent, crushed by his grief. Ginevra saw her father's agitation, and the moderation of his wrath pierced her to the heart; she had expetced a scene and furies; she had not steeled her soul against his gentleness.

"My dear father," she said in an appealing voice, "no, you shall never be abandoned by your Ginevra. But love me too a little for myself. If only you knew how he loves me! Ah, he could never bear to cause me pain!"

"What, comparisons already!" cried Piombo in a terrible voice. "No," he went on, "I cannot endure the idea. If he were to love you as you deserve, he would kill me; and if he were not to love you, I should stab him!"

Piombo's hands were trembling, his lips trembled, his whole frame trembled, and his eyes flashed lightnings; Ginevra alone could meet his gaze; for then her eyes too flashed fire, and the daughter was worthy of the father.

"To love you! What man is worthy of such a life?" he went on. "To love you as a father even—is it not to live in paradise? Who then could be worthy to be your husband?"

"He," said Ginevra. "He of whom I feel myself unworthy."

"He," echoed Piombo mechanically. "Who? He?"

"The man I love."

"Can he know you well enough already to adore you?"

"But, father," said Ginevra, feeling a surge of impatience, "even if he did not love me—so long as I love him——"

"You do love him then?" cried Piombo. Ginevra gently bowed her head. "You love him more than you love me?"

"The two feelings cannot be compared," she replied.

"One is stronger than the other?" said Piombo.

"Yes, I think so," said Ginevra.

"You shall not marry him!" cried the Corsican in a voice that made the windows rattle.

"I will marry him!" replied Ginevra calmly.

"Good God!" cried the mother, "how will this quarrel end? *Santa Virginia,* come between them!"

The Baron, who was striding up and down the room, came and seated himself. An icy sternness darkened his face; he looked steadfastly at his daughter, and said in a gentle and affectionate voice, "Nay, Ginevra—you will not marry him. Oh, do not say you will, this evening. Let me believe that you will not. Do you wish to see your father on his knees before you, and his white hairs humbled. I will beseech you——"

"Ginevra Piombo is not accustomed to promise and not to keep her word," said she: "I am your child."

"She is right," said the Baroness, "we come into the world to marry."

"And so you encourage her in disobedience," said the Baron to his wife, who, stricken by the reproof, froze into a statue.

"It is not disobedience to refuse to yield to an unjust command," replied Ginevra.

"It cannot be unjust when it emanates from your father's lips, my child. Why do you rise in judgment on me? Is not the repugnance I feel a counsel from on High? I am perhaps saving you from misfortune."

"The misfortune would be that he should not love me."

"Always he!"

"Yes, always," she said. "He is my life, my joy, my thought. Even if I obeyed you, he would be always in my heart. If you forbid me to marry him, will it not make me hate you?"

"You love us no longer!" cried Piombo.

"Oh!" said Ginevra, shaking her head.

"Well, then, forget him. Be faithful to us. After us . . you understand . . ."

"Father, would you make me wish that you were dead?" cried Ginevra.

"I shall outlive you; children who do not honor their parents die early," cried her father at the utmost pitch of exasperation.

"All the more reason for marrying soon and being happy," said she.

This coolness, this force of argument, brought Piombo's agitation to a crisis; the blood rushed violently to his head, his face turned purple. Ginevra shuddered; she flew like a bird on to her

father's knees, throw her arms around his neck, stroked his hair, and exclaimed, quite overcome——

"Oh, yes, let me die first! I could not survive you, my dear, kind father."

"Oh, my Ginevra, my foolish Ginevretta!" answered Piombo, whose rage melted under this caress as an icicle melts in the sunshine.

"It was time you should put an end to the matter," said the Baroness in a broken voice.

"Poor mother!"

"Ah, Ginevretta, mia Ginevra bella!"

And the father played with his daughter as if she were a child of six; he amused himself with undoing the waving tresses of her hair and dancing her on his knee; there was dotage in his demonstrations of tenderness. Presently his daughter scolded him as she kissed him, and tried, half in jest, to get leave to bring Louis to the house; but, jesting too, her father refused. She sulked, and recovered herself, and sulked again; then, at the end of the evening, she was only too glad to have impressed on her father the ideas of her love for Louis and of a marriage ere long.

Next day she said no more about it; she went later to the studio and returned early; she was more affectionate to her father than she had ever been, and showed herself grateful, as if to thank him for the consent to her marriage he seemed to give by silence. In the evening she played and sang for a long time, and exclaimed now and then, "This nocturne requires a man's voice!" She was an Italian, and that says everything.

A week later her mother beckoned her; Ginevra went, and then in her ear she whispered, "I have persuaded your father to receive him."

"Oh, mother! you make me very happy."

So that afternoon, Ginevra had the joy of coming home to her father's house leaning on Louis's arm. The poor officer came out of his hiding-place for the second time. Ginevra's active intervention addressed to the Duc de Feltre, then Minister of War, had been crowned with perfect success. Louis had just been reinstated as an officer on the reserve list. This was a very long step towards a prosperous future.

Informed by Ginevra of all the difficulties he would meet with in the Baron, the young officer dared not confess his dread of failing to please him. This man, so brave in adversity, so bold on the field of battle, quaked as he thought of entering the Piombos' drawing-room. Ginevra felt him tremble, and this emotion, of which their happiness was the first cause, was to her a fresh proof of his love.

"How pale you are!" said she, as they reached the gate of the hôtel.

"Oh, Ginevra! If my life alone were at stake——"

Though Bartolomeo had been informed by his wife of this official introduction of his daughter's lover, he did not rise to meet him, but remained in the armchair he usually occupied, and the severity of his countenance was icy.

"Father," said Ginevra, "I have brought you a gentleman whom you will no doubt be pleased to see. M. Louis, a soldier who fought quite close to the Emperor at Mont-Saint-Jean——"

The Baron rose, cast a furtive glance

at Louis, and said in a sardonic tone—

"Monsieur wears no orders?"

"I no longer wear the Legion of Honor," replied Louis bashfully, and he humbly remained standing.

Ginevra, hurt by her father's rudeness, brought forward a chair. The officer's reply satisfied the old Republican. Mme. Piombo, seeing that her husband's brows were recovering their natural shape, said, to revive the conversation, "Monsieur is wonderfully like Nina Porta. Do not you think that he has quite the face of a Porta?"

"Nothing can be more natural," replied the young man, on whom Piombo's flaming eyes were fixed. "Nina was my sister."

"You are Luigi Porta?" asked the old man.

"Yes."

Bartolomeo di Piombo rose, tottered, was obliged to lean on a chair, and looked at his wife. Elisa Piombo came up to him; then the two old folks silently left the room, arm in arm, with a look of horror at their daughter. Luigi Porta, quite bewildered, gazed at Ginevra, who turned as white as a marble statue, and remained with her eyes fixed on the door where her father and mother had disappeared. There was something so solemn in her silence and their retreat, that, for the first time in his life perhaps, a feeling of fear came over him. She clasped her hands tightly together, and said in a voice so choked that it would have been inaudible to anyone but a lover, "How much woe in one word!"

"In the name of our love, what have I said?" asked Luigi Porta.

"My father has never told me our deplorable history," she replied. "And when we left Corsica I was too young to know anything about it."

"Is it a vendetta?" asked Luigi, trembling.

"Yes. By questioning my mother I learnt that the Porta had killed my brothers and burnt down our house. My father then massacred all your family. How did you survive, you whom he thought he had tied to the posts of a bed before setting fire to the house?"

"I do not know," replied Luigi. "When I was six I was taken to Genoa, to an old man named Colonna. No account of my family was ever given to me; I only knew that I was an orphan, and penniless. Colonna was life a father to me; I bore his name till I entered the army; then, as I needed papers to prove my identity, old Colonna told me that, helpless as I was, and hardly more than a child, I had enemies. He made me promise to take the name of Luigi only, to evade them."

"Fly, fly, Luigi," cried Ginevra, "Yet, stay; I must go with you. So long as you are in my father's house you are safe. As soon as you quit it, take care of yourself. You will go from one danger to another. My father has two Corsicans in his service, and if he does not threaten your life they will."

"Ginevra," he said, "and must this hatred exist between us?"

She smiled sadly and bowed her head. But she soon raised it again with a sort of pride, and said, "Oh, Luigi, our feelings must be very pure and true that I should have the strength to walk in the path I am entering on. But it is for the sake of happiness which will last as long as life, is it not?"

Luigi answered only with a smile, and pressed her hand. The girl understood that only a great love could at such a moment scorn mere protestations. This calm and conscientious expression of Luigi's feelings seemed to speak for their strength and permanence. The fate of the couple was thus sealed. Ginevra foresaw many painful contests to be fought out, but the idea of deserting Louis—an idea which had perhaps floated before her mind—at once vanished. His, henceforth and forever, she suddenly dragged him away and out of the house, with a sort of violence, and did not quit him till they reached the house where Servin had taken a humble lodging for him.

When she returned to her father's house she had assumed the serenity which comes of a strong resolve. No change of manner revealed any uneasiness. She found her parents ready to sit down to dinner, and she looked at them with eyes devoid of defiance, and full of sweetness. She saw that her old mother had been weeping; at the sight of her red eyelids for a moment her heart failed her, but she hid her emotion. Piombo seemed to be a prey to anguish too keen, too concentrated to be shown by ordinary means of expression. The servants waited on a meal which no one ate. A horror of food is one of the symptoms indicative of a great crisis of the soul. All three rose without any one of them having spoken a word. When Ginevra was seated in the great, solemn drawing-room, between her father and mother, Piombo tried to speak, but he found no voice; he tried to walk about, but found no strength; he sat down again and rang the bell.

"Pietro," said he to the servant at least, "light the fire, I am cold."

Ginevra was shocked, and looked anxiously at her father. The struggle he was going through must be frightful; his face looked quite changed. Ginevra knew the extent of the danger that threatened her, but she did not tremble; while the glances that Bartolomeo cast at his daughter seemed to proclaim that he was at this moment in fear of the character whose violence was his own work. Between these two everything must be in excess. And the certainty of the possible change of feeling between the father and daughter filled the Baroness's face with an expression of terror.

"Ginevra, you love the enemy of your family," said Piombo at last, not daring to look at his daughter.

"That is true," she replied.

"You must choose between him and us. Our vendetta is part of ourselves. If you do not espouse my cause, you are not of my famliy."

"My choice is made," said Ginevra, in a steady voice.

His daughter's calmness misled Bartolomeo.

"Oh, my dear daughter!" cried the old man, whose eyelids were moist with tears, the first, the only tears he ever shed in his life.

"I shall be his wife," she said abruptly.

Bartolomeo could not see for a moment; but he recovered himself and replied, "This marriage shall never be so long as I live. I will never consent." Ginevra kept silence. "But, do you understand," the Baron went on, "that

Luigi is the son of the man who killed your brothers?"

"He was six years old when the crime was committed; he must be innocent of it," she answered.

"A Porta!" cried Bartolomeo.

"But how could I share this hatred?" said the girl eagerly. "Did you bring me up in the belief that a Porta was a monster? Could I imagine that even one was left of those you had killed? Is it not in nature that you should make your vendetta give way to my feelings?"

"A Porta!" repeated Piombo. "If his father had found you then in your bed, you would not be alive now. He would have dealt you a hundred deaths."

"Possibly," she said. "But his son has given me more than life. To see Luigi is a happiness without which I cannot live. Luigi has revealed to me the world of feeling. I have, perhaps, seen even handsomer faces than his, but none ever charmed me so much. I have, perhaps, heard voices—no, no, never one so musical! Luigi loves me. He shall be my husband."

"Never!" said Piombo. "Ginevra, I would sooner see you in your coffin!"

The old man rose, and paced the room with hurried strides, uttering fierce words, with pauses between that betrayed all his indignation.

"You think, perhaps, that you can bend my will? Undeceive yourself. I will not have a Porta for my son-in-law. That is my decision. Never speak of the matter again. I am Bartolomeo di Piombo, do you hear, Ginevra?"

"Do you attach any mysterious meaning to the words?" she coldly asked.

"They mean that I have a dagger, and that I do not fear the justice of men. We Corsicans settle such matters with God."

"Well," said the girl, "I am Ginevra di Piombo, and I declare that in six months I will be Luigi Porta's wife.—You are a tyrant, father," she added, after an ominous pause.

Bartolomeo clenched his fists, and struck the marble chimney-shelf.

"Ah! we are in Paris!" he muttered.

He said no more, but folded his arms and bowed his head on his breast; nor did he say another word the whole evening. Having asserted her will, the girl affected the most complete indifference; she sat down to the piano, sang, played the most charming music, with a grace and feeling that proclaimed her perfect freedom of mind, triumphing over her father, whose brow showed no relenting. The old man deeply felt this tacit insult, and at that moment gathered the bitter fruits of the education he had given his daughter. Respect is a barrier which protects the parents and the children alike, sparing those much sorrow, and these remorse.

The next day, as Ginevra was going out at the hour when she usually went to the studio, she found the door of the house closed upon her; but she soon devised means for informing Luigi Porta of her father's severity. A waiting woman, who could not read, carried to the young officer a letter written by Ginevra. For five days the lovers contrived to correspond, thanks to the plots that young people of twenty can always contrive.

The father and daughter rarely spoke to each other. Both had in the bottom of their hearts an element of hatred;

they suffered, but in pride and silence. Knowing well how strong were the bonds of love that tied them to each other, they tried to wrench them asunder, but without success. No sweet emotion ever came, as it had been wont, to give light to Bartolomeo's severe features when he gazed at his Ginevra, and there was something savage in her expression when she looked at her father. Reproach sat on her innocent brow; she gave herself up, indeed, to thoughts of happiness, but remorse sometimes dimmed her eyes. It was not, indeed, difficult to divine that she would never enjoy in peace a felicity which made her parents unhappy. In Bartolomeo, as in his daughter, all the irresolution arising from their native goodness of heart was doomed to shipwreck on their fierce pride and the revengeful spirit peculiar to the Corsicans. They encouraged each other in their wrath, and shut their eyes to the future. Perhaps, too, each fancied that the other would yield.

On Ginevra's birthday, her mother, heart-broken at this disunion, which was assuming a serious aspect, planned to reconcile the father and daughter by an appeal to the memories of this anniversary. They were all three sitting in Bartolomeo's room. Ginevra guessed her mother's purpose from the hesitation written in her face, and she smiled sadly. At this instant a servant announced two lawyers, accompanied by several witnesses, who all came into the room. Bartolomeo stared at the men, whose cold, set faces were in themselves an insult to souls so fevered as those of the three principal actors in this scene. The old man turned uneasily to his daughter, and saw on her face a smile of triumph which led him to suspect some catastrophe; but he affected, as savages do, to preserve a deceitful rigidity, while he looked at the two lawyers with a sort of apathetic curiosity. At a gesture of invitation from the old man the visitors took seats.

"Monsieur is no doubt Baron di Piombo?" said the elder of the two lawyers.

Bartolomeo bowed. The lawyer gave his head a little jerk, looked at Ginevra with the sly expression of a bailiff nabbing a debtor; then he took out his snuff-box, opened it, and, taking a pinch of snuff, absorbed it in little sniffs while considering the opening words of his discourse; and while pronouncing them he made constant pauses, an oratorical effect which a dash in printing represents very imperfectly.

"Monsieur," said he, "I am M. Roguin, notary to mademoiselle, your daughter, and we are here—my colleague and I—to carry out the requirements of the law, and—to put an end to the divisions which—as it would seem—have arisen—between you and mademoiselle, your daughter—on the question—of—her—marriage with M. Luigi Porta." This speech, made in a pedantic style, seemed, no doubt, to M. Roguin much too fine to be understood all in a moment, and he stopped, while looking at Bartolomeo with an expression peculiar to men of business, and which is halfway between servility and familiarity. Lawyers are so much used to feign interest in the persons to whom they speak that their features at last assume a grimace which they can put on and off with their official *pallium*. This caricature of friend-

liness, so mechanical as to be easily detected, irritated Bartolomeo to such a pitch that it took all his self-control not to throw M. Roguin out of the window; a look of fury emphasized his wrinkles, and on seeing this the notary said to himself: "I am making an effect."

"But," he went on in a honeyed voice, "M. le Baron, on such occasions as these, our intervention must always, at first, be essentially conciliatory.—Have the kindness to listen to me.—It is in evidence that Mlle. Ginevra Piombo—has to-day—attained the age at which, after a 'respectful summons,' she may proceed to the solemnization of her marriage—notwithstanding that her parents refuse their consent. Now—it is customary in families—which enjoy a certain consideration—which move in society—and preserve their dignity—people, in short, to whom it is important not to let the public into the secret of their differences—and who also do not wish to do themselves an injury by blighting the future lives of a young husband and wife—for that is doing themselves an injury. It is the custom, I was saying—in such highly respectable families—not to allow the serving of such a summons—which must be—which always is a record of a dispute—which at last ceases to exist. For as soon, monsieur, as a young lady has recourse to a 'respectful summons' she proclaims a determination so obstinate—that her father—and her mother—" he added, turning to the Baroness, "can have no further hope of seeing her follow their advice.—Hence the parental prohibition being nullified—in the first place by this fact—and also by the decision of the law—it is always the case that a wise father, after finally remonstrating with his child, allows her the liberty——"

M. Roguin paused, perceiving that he might talk on for two hours without extracting an answer; and he also felt a peculiar agitation as he looked at the man he was trying to convince. An extrordinary change had come over Bartolomeo's countenance. All its lines were set, giving him an expression of indescribable cruelty, and he glared at the lawyer like a tiger. The Baroness sat mute and passive. Ginevra, calm and resolute, was waiting; she knew that the notary's voice was stronger than hers, and she seemed to have made up her mind to keep silence. At the moment when Roguin ceased speaking, the scene was so terrible that the witnesses, as strangers, trembled; never, perhaps, had such a silence weighed on them. The lawyers looked at each other as if in consultation, then they rose and went to the window.

"Did you ever come across clients made to this pattern?" asked Roguin of his colleague.

"There is nothing to be got out of him," said the younger man. "In your place I should read the summons and nothing more. The old man is no joke; he is choleric, and you will gain nothing by trying to discuss matters with him."

M. Roguin therefore read aloud from a sheet of stamped paper a summons ready drawn up, and coldly asked Bartolomeo what his reply was.

"Are there laws in France, then, that upset a father's authority?" asked the Corsican.

"Monsieur——" said Roguin, smoothly.

"That snatch a child from her father?"

"Monsieur——"

"That rob an old man of his last consolation?"

"Monsieur, your daughter belongs to you only so long——"

"That kill her?"

"Monsieur, allow me."

There is nothing more hideous than the cold-blooded and close reasoning of a lawyer in the midst of such scenes of passion as they are usually mixed up with. The faces which Piombo saw seemed to him to have escaped from hell; his cold and concentrated rage knew no bounds at the moment when his little opponent's calm and almost piping voice uttered that fatal, "Allow me." He sprang at a long dagger which hung from a nail over the chimney-piece, and rushed at his daughter. The younger of the two lawyers and one of the witnesses throw themselves between him and Ginevra; but Bartolomeo brutally knocked them over, showing them a face of fire and glowing eyes which seemed more terrible than the flash of the dagger. When Ginevra found herself face to face with her father she looked at him steadily with a glance of triumph, went slowly towards him, and knelt down.

"No, no! I cannot!" he exclaimed, flinging away the weapon with such force that it stuck fast in the wainscot.

"Mercy, then, mercy!" said she. "You hesitate to kill me, but you refuse me life. Oh, father, I never loved you so well—but give me Luigi. I ask your consent on my knees; a daughter may humble herself to her father. My Luigi, or I must die!"

The violent excitement that choked her prevented her saying more; she found no voice; her convulsive efforts plainly showed that she was between life and death. Bartolomeo roughly pushed her away.

"Go," he said, "the wife of Luigi Porta cannot be a Piombo. I no longer have a daughter! I cannot bring myself to curse you, but I give you up. You have now no father. My Ginevra Piombo is buried then!" he exclaimed in a deep tone, as he clutched at his heart.—"Go, I say, wretched girl," he went on after a moment's silence. "Go, and never let me see you again."

He took Ginevra by the arm, and in silence led her out of the house.

"Luigi!" cried Ginevra, as she went into the humble room where the officer was lodged, "my Luigi, we have no fortune but our love."

"We are richer than all the kings of the earth," he replied.

"My father and mother have cast me out," said she with deep melancholy.

"I will love you for them."

"Shall we be very happy?" she cried, with a gayety that had something terrible in it.

"And forever!' he answered, clasping her to his heart.

On the day following that on which Ginevra had quitted her father's house, she went to beg Mme. Servin to grant her protection and shelter till the time, fixed by law, when she could be married to Luigi. There bgean her apprenticeship to the troubles which the world strews in the way of those who do not obey its rules. Mme. Servin, who was greatly distressed at the injury that Ginevra's adventure had done the painter, received the fugitive coldly,

and explained to her with circumspect politeness that she was not to count on her support. Too proud to insist, but amazed at such selfishness, to which she was unaccustomed, the young Corsican went to lodge in a furnished house as near as possible to Luigi's. The son of the Portas spent all his days at the feet of his beloved; his youthful love, and the purity of his mind, dispersed the clouds which her father's reprobation had settled on the banished daughter's brow; and he painted the future as so fair that she ended by smiling, though she could not forget her parents' severity.

One morning the maid of the house brought up to her several trunks containing dress-stuffs, linen, and a quantity of things needful for a young woman settling for the first time. In this she recognized the foreseeing kindness of a mother; for as she examined these gifts, she found a purse into which the Baroness had put some money belonging to Ginevra, adding all her own savings. With the money was a letter, in which she implored her daughter to give up her fatal purpose of marrying, if there were yet time. She had been obliged, she said, to take unheard-of precautions to get this small assistance conveyed to Ginevra; she begged her not to accuse her of hardness if henceforth she left her neglected; she feared she could do no more for her; she blessed her, hoped she might find happiness in this fatal marriage if she persisted, and assured her that her one thought was of her beloved daughter. At this point tears had blotted out many words of the letter.

"Oh, mother!" cried Ginevra, quite overcome.

She felt a longing to throw herself at her mother's feet, to see her, to breathe the blessed air of home; she was on the point of rushing off when Luigi came in. She looked at him, and filial affection vanished, her tears were dried, she could not find it in her to leave the unhappy and loving youth. To be the sole hope of a noble soul, to love and to desert it—such a sacrifice is treason of which no young heart is capable. Ginevra had the generosity to bury her grief at the bottom of her soul.

At last the day of their wedding came. Ginevra found no one near her. Luigi took advantage of the moment when she was dressing to go in search of the necessary witnesses to their marriage act. These were very good people. One of them, an old quartermaster of hussars, had, when in the army, found himself under such obligations to Luigi as an honest man never forgets; he had become a job-master, and had several hackney carriages. The other, a builder, was the proprietor of the house where the young couple were to lodge. Each of these brought a friend, and all four came with Luigi to fetch the bride. Unaccustomed as they were to social grimacing, seeing nothing extraordinary in the service they were doing to Luigi, these men were decently but quite plainly dressed, and there was nothing to proclaim the gay escort of a wedding. Ginevra herself was very simply clad, to be in keeping with her fortune; but, nevertheless, there was something so noble and impressive in her beauty that at the sight of her the words died

on the lips of the good folks who had been prepared to pay her some compliment; they bowed respectfully, and she bowed in return; they looked at her in silence, and could only admire her. Joy can only express itself among equals. So, as fate would have it, all was gloomy and serious around the lovers; there was nothing to reflect their happiness.

The church and the Mairie were not far away. The two Corsicans, followed by the four witnesses required by law, decided to go on foot, with a simplicity which robbed this great event of social life of all parade. In the courtyard of the Mairie they found a crowd of carriages, which announced a numerous party within. They went upstairs and entered a large room, where the couples who were to be made happy on this particular day were awaiting the Maire of that quarter of Paris with considerable impatience. Ginevra sat down by Luigi on the end of a long bench, and their witnesses remained standing for lack of seats. Two brides, pompously arrayed in white, loaded with ribbons and lace and pearls, and crowned with bunches of orange-blossom of which the sheeny buds quivered under their veils, were surrounded by their families and accompanied by their mothers, to whom they turned with looks at once timid and satisfied; every eye reflected their happiness, and every face seemed to exhale benedictions. Fathers, witnesses, brothers, and sisters were coming and going like a swarm of insects playing in a sunbeam which soon must vanish. Everyone seemed to understand the preciousness of this brief hour in life when the heart stands poised between two hopes—the wishes of the past, the promise of the future.

At this sight Ginevra felt her heart swell, and she pressed Luigi's arm. He gave her a look, and a tear rose to the young man's eye; he never saw more clearly than at that moment all that his Ginevra had sacrificed for him. That rare tear made the young girl forget the forlorn position in which she stood. Love poured treasures of light between the lovers, who from that moment saw nothing but each other in the midst of the confusion.

Their witnesses, indifferent to the ceremonial, were quietly discussing business matters.

"Oats are very dear," said the quartermaster to the mason.

"They have not yet gone up so high as plaster in proportion," said the builder. And they walked round the large room.

"What a lot of time we are losing here!" exclaimed the mason, putting a huge silver watch back into his pocket.

Luigi and Ginevra, clinging to each other, seemed to be but one person A poet would certainly have admired these two heads, full of the same feeling, alike in coloring, melancholy and silent in the presence of the two buzzing wedding-parties, of four excited families sparkling with diamonds and flowers, and full of gayety which seemed a mere effervescence. All the joys of which these loud and gorgeous groups made a display, Luigi and Ginevra kept buried at the bottom of their hearts. On one side was the coarse clamor of pleasure; on the other the delicate silence of happy souls: earth and heaven.

But Ginevra trembled, and could not altogether shake off her woman's weak-

ness. Superstitious, as Italians are, she regarded this contrast as an omen, and in the depths of her heart she harbored a feeling of dread, as unconquerable as her love itself.

Suddenly an official in livery threw open the double doors; silence fell, and his voice sounded like a yelp as he called out the names of M. Luigi Porta and Mlle. Ginevra Piombo. This incident caused the pair some embarrassment. The celebrity of the name of Piombo attracted attention; the spectators looked about them for a wedding-party which must surely be a splendid one. Ginevra rose; her eyes, thunderous with pride, subdued the crowd, she took Luigi's arm, and went forward with a firm step, followed by the witnesses. A murmur of astonishment which rapidly grew louder, and whispering on all sides, reminded Ginevra that the world was calling her to account for her parents' absence. Her father's curse seemed to be pursuing her.

"Wait for the families of the bride and bridegroom," said the Maire to the clerk, who at once began to read the contracts.

"The father and mother enter a protest," said the clerk indifferently.

"On both sides?" asked the Maire.

"The man is an orphan."

"Where are the witnesses?"

"They are here," said the clerk, pointing to the four motionless and silent men who stood like statues, with their arms crossed.

"But if the parents protest——?" said the Maire.

"The 'respectful summons' has been presented in due form," replied the man, rising to place the various documents in the functionary's hands.

This discussion in an office seemed to brand them, and in a few words told a whole history. The hatred of the Porta and the Piombo, all these terrible passions, were thus recorded on a page of a register, as the annals of a nation may be inscribed on a tombstone in a few lines, nay, even in a single name: Robespierre or Napoleon. Ginevra was trembling. Like the dove crossing the waters, which had no rest for her foot but in the ark, her eyes could take refuge only in Luigi's, for all else was cold and sad. The Maire had a stern, disapproving look, and his clerk stared at the couple with ill-natured curiosity. Nothing ever had less the appearance of a festivity. Like all the other events of human life when they are stripped of their accessories, it was a simple thing in itself, immense in its idea.

After some questions, to which they replied, the Maire muttered a few words, and then, having signed their names in the register, Luigi and Ginevra were man and wife. The young Corsicans, whose union had all the poetry which genius has consecrated in Romeo and Juliet, went away between two lines of jubilant relations to whom they did not belong, and who were out of patience at the delay caused by a marriage apparently so forlorn. When the girl found herself in the courtyard and under the open sky, a deep sigh broke from her very heart.

"Oh, will a whole life of love and devotion suffice to repay my Ginevra for her courage and tenderness?" said Luigi.

At these words, spoken with tears of joy, the bride forgot all her suffering, for she had suffered in showing herself

to the world claiming a happiness which her parents refused to sanction.

"Why do men try to come between us?" she said, with a simplicity of feeling that enchanted Luigi.

Gladness made them more light-hearted. They saw neither the sky, nor the earth, nor the houses, and flew on wings to the church. At last they found themselves in a small, dark chapel, and in front of a humble altar, where an old priest married them. There, as at the Mairie, they were pursued by the two weddings that persecuted them with their splendor. The church, filled with friends and relations, rang with the noise made by carriages, beadles, porters, and priests. Altars glittered with ecclesiastical magnificence; the crowns of orange-blossom that decked the statues of the Virgin seemed quite new. Nothing was to be seen but flowers with perfumes, gleaming tapers, and velvet cushions embroidered with gold. God seemed to have a share in this rapture of a day.

When the symbol of eternal union was to be held above the heads of Luigi and Ginevra—the yoke of white satin which for some is so soft, so bright, so light, and for the greater number is made of lead—the priest looked round in vain for two young boys to fill the happy office; two of the witnesses took their place. The priest gave the couple a hasty discourse on the dangers of life, and on the duties they must one day inculcate in their children, and he here took occasion to insinuate a reflection on the absence of Ginevra's parents; then having united them in the presence of God, as the Maire had united them in the presence of the Law, he ended the Mass, and left them.

"God bless them," said Vergniaud to the mason at the church door. "Never were two creatures better made for each other. That girl's parents are wretches. I know no braver soldier than Colonel Luigi! If all the world had behaved as he did, *L'autre*[1] would still be with us."

The soldier's blessing, the only one breathed for them this day, fell like balm on Ginevra's heart.

They all parted with shaking of hands, and Luigi cordially thanked his landlord.

"Good-by, old fellow," said Luigi to the quartermaster. "And thank you."

"At your service, colonel, soul and body, horses and chaises—all that is mine is yours."

"How well he loves you!" said Ginevra.

Luigi eagerly led his wife home to the house they were to live in; they soon reached the modest apartment, and there, when the door was closed, Luigi took her in his arms, exclaiming, "Oh, my Ginevra—for you are mine now—here is our real festival! Here," he went on, "all will smile on us."

Together they went through the three rooms which composed their dwelling. The entrance hall served as drawing-room and dining-room. To the right was a bedroom, to the left a sort of large closet which Luigi had arranged for his beloved wife, where she found easels, her paint-box, some casts, models, lay figures, pictures, portfolios, in short, all the apparatus of an artist.

"Here I shall work," said she, with childlike glee.

She looked for a long time at the paper and the furniture, constantly turn-

[1] Napoleon.

ing to Luigi to thank him, for there was a kind of magnificence in this humble retreat; a bookcase contained Ginevra's favorite books, and there was a piano. She sat down on an ottoman, drew Luigi to her side, and clasping his hand, "You have such good taste," said she, in a caressing tone.

"Your words make me very happy," he replied.

"But, come, let us see everything," said Ginevra, from whom Luigi had kept the secret of this little home.

They went into a bridal chamber that was as fresh and white as a maiden.

"Oh! come away," said Luigi, laughing.

"But I must see everything," and Ginevra imperiously went on, examining all the furniture with the curiosity of an antiquary studying a medal. She touched the silk stuff and scrutinized everything with the childlike delight of a bride turning over the treasures of the *corbeille* brought her by her husband.

"We have begun by ruining ourselves," she said in a half-glad, half-regretful tone.

"It is true; all my arrears of pay are there," replied Luigi. "I sold it to a good fellow named Gigonnet."

"Why?" she asked, in a reproachful voice, which betrayed, however, a secret satisfaction. "Do you think I should be less happy under a bare roof? Still," she went on, "it is all very pretty, and it is ours!"

Luigi looked at her with such enthusiasm that she cast down her eyes, and said, "Let us see the rest."

Above these three rooms, in the attics, were a workroom for Luigi, a kitchen, and a servant's room. Ginevra was content with her little domain, though the view was limited by the high wall of a neighboring house, and the courtyard on which the rooms looked was gloomy. But the lovers were so glad of heart, hope so beautified the future, that they would see nothing but enchantment in their mysterious dwelling. They were buried in this huge house, lost in the immensity of Paris, like two pearls in their shell, in the bosom of the deep sea. For anyone else it would have been a prison; to them it was Paradise.

The first days of their married life were given to love; it was too difficult for them to devote themselves at once to work, and they could not resist the fascination of their mutual passion. Luigi would recline for hours at his wife's feet, admiring the color of her hair, the shape of her forehead, the exquisite setting of her eyes, the purity and whiteness of the arched brow beneath which they slowly rose or fell, expressing the happiness of satisfied love. Ginevra stroked her Luigi's locks, never tiring of gazing at what she called, in one of her own phrases, the *beltà folgorante* of the young man, and his delicately cut features; always fascinated by the dignity of his manners, while always charming him by the grace of her own. They played like children with the merest trifles, these trifles always brought them back to their passion, and they ceased playing only to lapse into the day dreams of *far niente*. An air sung by Ginevra would reproduce for them the exquisite hues of their love.

Or, matching their steps as they had matched their souls, they wandered about the country, finding their love in everything, in the flowers, in the sky, in the heart of the fiery glow of the setting

sun; they read it even in the changing clouds that were tossed on the winds. No day was ever like the last, their love continued to grow because it was true. In a very few days they had proved each other, and had instinctively perceived that their souls were of such a temper that their inexhaustible riches seemed to promise ever new joys for the future. This was love in all its fresh candor, with its endless prattle, its unfinished sentences, its long silences, its Oriental restfulness and ardor. Luigi and Ginevra had wholly understood love. Is not love like the sea, which, seen superficially or in haste, is accused of monotony by vulgar minds, while certain privileged beings can spend all their life admiring it and finding in it changeful phenomena which delight them?

One day, however, prudence dragged the young couple from their Garden of Eden; they must work for their living. Ginevra, who had a remarkable talent for copying pictures, set to work to produce copies, and formed a connection among dealers. Luigi, too, eagerly sought some occupation; but it was difficult for a young officer, whose talents were limited to a thorough knowledge of tactics, to find any employment in Paris. At last, one day when, weary of his vain efforts, he felt despair in his soul at seeing that the whole burden of providing for their existence rested on Ginevra, it occurred to him that he might earn something by his handwriting, which was beautiful. With a perseverance, of which his wife had set the example, he went to ask work of the attorneys, the notaries, and the pleaders of Paris. The frankness of his manners and his painful situation greatly interested people in his favor, and he got enough copying to be obliged to employ youths under him. Presently he took work on a larger scale. The income derived from this office-work and the price of Ginevra's paintings put the young household on a footing of comfort, which they were proud of as the fruit of their own industry.

This was the sunniest period of their life. The days glided swiftly by between work and the happiness of love. In the evening after working hard they found themselves happy in Ginevra's cell. Music then consoled them for their fatigues. No shade of melancholy ever clouded the young wife's features, and she never allowed herself to utter a lament. She could always appear to her Luigi with a smile on her lips and a light in her eyes. Each cherished a ruling thought which would have made them take pleasure in the hardest toil: Ginevra told herself she was working for Luigi, and Luigi for Ginevra. Sometimes, in her husband's absence, the young wife would think of the perfect joy it would have been if this life of love might have been spent in the sight of her father and mother; then she would sink into deep melancholy, and feel all the pangs of remorse; dark pictures would pass like shadows before her fancy; she would see her old father alone, or her mother weeping in the evenings, and hiding her tears from the inexorable Piombo. Those two grave, white heads would suddenly rise up before her, and she fancied she would never see them again but in the fantastical light of memory. This idea haunted her like a presentiment.

She kept the anniversary of their

wedding by giving her husband a portrait he had often wished for—that of his Ginevra. The young artist had never executed so remarkable a work. Apart from the likeness, which was perfect, the brilliancy of her beauty, the purity of her feelings, the happiness of love, were rendered with a kind of magic. The masterpiece was hung up with due ceremony.

They spent another year in the midst of comfort. The history of their life can be told in these words: "They were happy." No event occurred deserving to be related.

At the beginning of the winter of 1819 the picture-dealers advised Ginevra to bring them something else than copies, as, in consequence of the great competition, they could no longer sell them to advantage. Mme. Porta acknowledged the mistake she had made in not busying herself with genre pictures which would have won her a name; she undertook to paint portraits; but she had to contend against a crowd of artists even poorer than herself. However, as Luigi and Ginevra had saved some money, they did not despair of the future. At the end of this same winter Luigi was working without ceasing. He, too, had to compete with rivals; the price of copying had fallen so low that he could no longer employ assistants, and was compelled to give up more time to his labor to earn the same amount. His wife had painted several pictures which were not devoid of merit, but dealers were scarcely buying even those of artists of repute. Ginevra offered them for almost nothing, and could not sell them.

The situation of the household was something terrible; the souls of the husband and wife floated in happiness, love loaded them with its treasures; poverty rose up like a skeleton in the midst of this harvest of joys, and they hid their alarms from each other. When Ginevra felt herself on the verge of tears as she saw Luigi suffering, she heaped caresses on him; Luigi, in the same way, hid the blackest care in his heart, while expressing the fondest devotion to Ginevra. They sought some compensation for their woes in the enthusiasm of their feelings, and their words, their joys, their playfulness, were marked by a kind of frenzy. They were alarmed at the future. What sentiment is there to compare in strength with a passion which must end to-morrow—killed by death or necessity? When they spoke of their poverty, they felt the need of deluding each other, and snatched at the smallest hope with equal eagerness.

One night Ginevra sought in vain for Luigi at her side, and got up quite frightened. A pale gleam reflected from the dingy wall of the little courtyard led her to guess that her husband sat up to work at night. Luigi waited till his wife was asleep to go up to his workroom. The clock struck four. Ginevra went back to bed and feigned sleep; Luigi came back, overwhelmed by fatigue and want of sleep, and Ginevra gazed sadly at the handsome face on which labor and anxiety had already traced some lines.

"And it is for me that he spends the night in writing," she thought, and she wept.

An idea came to dry her tears: she would imitate Luigi. That same day she went to a rich print-seller, and by

the help of a letter of recommendation to him that she had obtained from Élie Magus, a picture-dealer, she got some work in coloring prints. All day she painted and attended to her household cares, then at night she colored prints. These two beings, so tenderly in love, got into bed only to get out of it again. Each pretended to sleep, and out of devotion to the other stole away as soon as one had deceived the other. One night Luigi, knocked over by a sort of fever caused by work, of which the burden was beginning to crush him, threw open the window of his workroom to inhale the fresh morning air, and shake off his pain, when, happening to look down, he saw the light thrown on the wall by Ginevra's lamp; the unhappy man guessed the truth; he went downstairs, walking softly, and discovered his wife in her studio coloring prints.

"Oh, Ginevra," he exclaimed.

She started convulsively in her chair, and turned scarlet.

"Could I sleep while you were wearing yourself out with work?" said she.

"But I alone have a right to work so hard."

"And can I sit idle?" replied the young wife, whose eyes filled with tears, "when I know that every morsel of bread almost costs us a drop of your blood? I should die if I did not add my efforts to yours. Ought we not to have everything in common, pleasures and pains?"

"She is cold!" cried Luigi, in despair. "Wrap your shawl closer over your chest, my Ginevra, the night is damp and chilly."

They went to the window, the young wife leaning her head on her beloved husband's shoulder, he with his arm round her, sunk in deep silence, and watching the sky which dawn was slowly lighting up.

Gray clouds swept across in quick succession, and the east grew brighter by degrees.

"See," said Ginevra, "it is a promise—we shall be happy."

"Yes, in heaven!" replied Luigi, with a bitter smile. "Oh, Ginevra! you who deserved all the riches of earth——"

"I have your heart!" said she in a glad tone.

"Ah, and I do not complain," he went on, clasping her closely to him. And he covered the delicate face with kisses; it was already beginning to lose the freshness of youth, but the expression was so tender and sweet that he could never look at it without feeling comforted.

"How still!" said Ginevra. "I enjoy sitting late, my dearest. The majesty of night is really contagious; it is impressive, inspiring; there is something strangely solemn in the thought: all sleeps, but I am awake."

"Oh, my Ginevra, I feel, not for the first time, the refined grace of your soul—but, see, this is daybreak, come and sleep."

"Yes," said she, "if I am not the only one to sleep. I was miserable indeed the night when I discovered that my Luigi was awake and at work without me."

The valor with which the young people defied misfortune for some time found a reward. But the event which usually crowns the joys of a household was destined to be fatal to them. Ginevra gave birth to a boy who, to use a common phrase, was as beautiful as the day. The feeling of motherhood doubled the young creature's strength. Luigi borrowed

money to defray the expenses of her confinement. Thus, just at first, she did not feel all the painfulness of their situation, and the young parents gave themselves up to the joy of rearing a child. This was their last gleam of happiness. Like two swimmers who unite their forces to stem a current, the Corcisans at first struggled bravely; but sometimes they gave themselves up to an apathy resembling the torpor that precedes death, and they soon were obliged to sell their little treasures.

Poverty suddenly stood before them, not hideous, but humbly attired, almost pleasant to endure; there was nothing appalling in her voice; she did not bring despair with her, nor specters, nor squalor, but she made them forget the traditions and the habit of comfort; she broke the mainsprings of pride. Then came misery in all its horror, reckless of her rags, and trampling every human feeling under foot. Seven or eight months after the birth of little Bartolomeo it would have been difficult to recognize the original of the beautiful portrait, the sole adornment of their bare room, in the mother who was suckling a sickly baby. Without any fire in bitter winter weather, Ginevra saw the soft outlines of her face gradually disappear, her cheeks became as white as porcelain, her eyes colorless, as though the springs of life were drying up in her. And watching her starved and pallid infant, she suffered only in his young misery, while Luigi had not the heart even to smile at his boy.

"I have scoured Paris," he said in a hollow voice. "I know no one, and how can I dare beg of strangers? Vergniaud, the horse-breeder, my old comrade in Egypt, is implicated in some conspiracy, and has been sent to prison; besides, he had lent me all he had to lend. As to the landlord, he has not asked me for any rent for more than a year."

"But we do not want for anything," Ginevra gently answered, with an affectation of calmness.

"Each day brings some fresh difficulty," replied Luigi, with horror.

Luigi took all Ginevra's paintings, the portrait, some furniture which they yet could dispense with, and sold them all for a mere trifle; the money thus obtained prolonged their sufferings for a little while. During these dreadful days Ginevra showed the sublime heights of her character, and the extent of her resignation. She bore the inroads of suffering with stoical firmness. Her vigorous soul upheld her under all ills; with a weak hand she worked on by her dying child, fulfilled her household duties with miraculous activity, and was equal to everything. She was even happy when she saw on Luigi's lips a smile of surprise at the look of neatness she contrived to give to the one room to which they had been reduced.

"I have kept you a piece of bread, dear," she said one evening when he came in tired.

"And you?"

"I have dined, dear Luigi; I want nothing." And the sweet expression of her face, even more than her words, urged him to accept the food of which she had deprived herself. Luigi embraced here with one of the despairing kisses which friends gave each other in 1793 as they mounted the scaffold together. In such moments as these two human creatures see each other heart to

heart. Thus the unhappy Luigi, understanding at once that his wife was fasting, felt the fever that was undermining her; he shivered, and went out on the pretext of pressing business, for he would rather have taken the most insidious poison than escape death by eating the last morsel of bread in the house.

He wandered about Paris among the smart carriages, in the midst of the insulting luxury that is everywhere flaunted; he hurried past the shops of the money-changers where gold glitters in the window; finally, he determined to sell himself, to offer himself as a substitute for the conscription, hoping by this sacrifice to save Ginevra, and that during his absence she might be taken into favor again by Bartolomeo. So he went in search of one of the men who deal in these white slaves, and felt a gleam of happiness at recognizing in him an old officer of the Imperial Guard.

"For two days I have eaten nothing," he said, in a slow, weak voice. "My wife is dying of hunger, and never utters a complaint; she will die, I believe, with a smile on her lips. For pity's sake, old comrade," he added, with a forlorn smile, "pay for me in advance; I am strong, I have left the service, and I——"

The officer gave Luigi something on account of the sum he promised to get for him. The unhappy man laughed convulsively when he grasped a handful of gold pieces, and ran home as fast as he could go, panting, and exclaiming as he went, "Oh, my Ginevra—Ginevra!"

It was growing dark by the time he reached home. He went in softly, fearing to over-excite his wife, whom he had left so weak; the last pale rays of sunshine, coming in at the dormer window, fell on Ginevra's face. She was asleep in her chair with her baby at her breast.

"Wake up, my darling," said he, without noticing the attitude of the child, which seemed at this moment to have a supernatural glory.

On hearing his voice, the poor mother opened her eyes, met Luigi's look, and smiled; but Luigi gave a cry of terror. He hardly recognized his half-crazed wife, to whom he showed the gold, with a gesture of savage vehemence.

Ginevra began to laugh mechanically, but suddenly she cried in a terrible voice, "Louis, the child is cold!"

She looked at the infant and fainted. Little Bartolomeo was dead.

Luigi took his wife in his arms, without depriving her of the child, which she clutched to her with incomprehensible strength, and after laying her on the bed he went out to call for help.

"Great Heaven!" he exclaimed to his landlord, whom he met on the stairs, "I have money, and my child is dead of hunger, and my wife is dying. Help us."

In despair he went back to his wife, leaving the worthy builder and various neighbors to procure whatever might relieve the misery of which till now they had known nothing, so carefully had the Corsicans concealed it out of a feeling of pride. Luigi had tossed the gold pieces on the floor, and was kneeling by the bed where his wife lay.

"Father, take charge of my son, who bears your name!" cried Ginevra in her delirium.

"Oh, my angel, be calm," said Luigi, kissing her, "better days await us!" His

voice and embrace restored her to some composure.

"Oh, my Louis," she went on, looking at him with extraordinary fixity, "listen to me. I feel that I am dying. My death is quite natural. I have been suffering too much; and then happiness so great as mine had to be paid for. Yes, my Luigi, be comforted. I have been so happy that if I had to begin life again, I would again accept our lot. I am a bad mother; I weep for you even more than for my child.—My child!" she repeated in a full, deep voice. Two tears dropped from her dying eyes, and she suddenly clasped yet closer the little body she could not warm. "Give my hair to my father in memory of his Ginevra," she added. "Tell him that I never, never, accused him——"

Her head fell back on her husband's arm.

"No, no, you cannot die!" cried Luigi. "A doctor is coming. We have food. Your father will receive you into favor. Prosperity is dawning on us. Stay with us, angel of beauty!"

But that faithful and loving heart was growing cold. Ginevra instinctively turned her eyes on the man she adored, though she was no longer conscious of anything; confused images rose before her mind, fast losing all memories of earth. She knew that Luigi was there, for she clung more and more tightly to his ice-cold hand, as if to hold herself up above a gulf into which she feared to fall.

"You are cold, dear," she said presently; "I will warm you."

She tried to lay her husband's hand over her heart, but she was dead. Two doctors, a priest, and some neighbors came in at this moment, bringing everything that was needful to save the lives of the young couple and to soothe their despair. At first these intruders made a good deal of noise, but when they were all in the room an appalling silence fell.

While this scene was taking place Bartolomeo and his wife were sitting in their old armchairs, each at one corner of the immense fireplace that warmed the great drawing-room of their mansion. The clock marked midnight. It was long since the old couple had slept well. At this moment they were silent, like two old folks in their second childhood, who look at everything and see nothing. The deserted room, to them full of memories, was feebly lighted by a single lamp fast dying out. But for the dancing flames on the hearth they would have been in total darkness. One of their friends had just left them, and the chair on which he had sat during his visit stood between the old people. Piombo had already cast more than one glance at this chair, and these glances, fraught with thoughts, followed each other like pangs of remorse, for the empty chair was Ginevra's. Elisa Piombo watched the expressions that passed across her husband's pale face. Though she was accustomed to guess the Corsican's feelings from the violent changes in his features, they were to-night by turns so threatening and so sad that she failed to read this inscrutable soul.

Was Bartolomeo yielding to the overwhelming memories aroused by that chair? Was he pained at perceiving that it had been used by a stranger for the first time since his daughter's departure?

Had the hour of mercy, the hour so long and vainly hoped for, struck at last?

These reflections agitated the heart of Elisa Piombo. For a moment her husband's face was so terrible that she quaked at having ventured on so innocent a device to give her an opportunity of speaking of Ginevra. At this instant the northerly blast flung the snowflakes against the shutters with such violence that the old people could hear their soft pelting. Ginevra's mother bent her head to hide her tears from her husband. Suddenly a sigh broke from the old man's heart; his wife looked at him; he was downcast. For the second time in three years she ventured to speak to him of his daughter.

"Supposing Ginevra were cold!" she exclaimed in an undertone. "Or perhaps she is hungry," she went on. The Corsican shed a tear. "She has a child, and cannot suckle it—her milk is dried up" —the mother added vehemently, with an accent of despair.

"Let her come, oh, let her come!" cried Piombo. "Oh, my darling child, you have conquered me."

The mother rose, as if to go to fetch her daughter. At this instant the door was flung open, and a man, whose face had lost all semblance of humanity, suddenly stood before them.

"Dead!—Our families were doomed to exterminate each other; for this is all that remains of her," he said, laying on the table Ginevra's long back hair.

The two old people started, as though they had been struck by a thunderbolt; they could not see Luigi.

"He has spared us a pistol shot, for he is dead," said Bartolomeo deliberately, as he looked on the ground.

Honorine

To Monsieur Achille Devéria

An affectionate remembrance from the Author

If the French have as great an aversion for traveling as the English have a propensity for it, both English and French have perhaps sufficient reasons. Something better than England is everywhere to be found; whereas it is excessively difficult to find the charms of France outside France. Other countries can show admirable scenery, and they frequently offer greater comfort than that of France, which makes but slow progress in that particular. They sometimes display a bewildering magnificence, grandeur, and luxury; they lack neither grace nor noble manners; but the life of the brain, the talent for conversation, the "Attic salt" so familiar at Paris, the prompt apprehension of what one is thinking, but does not say, the spirit of the unspoken, which is half the French language, is nowhere else to be met with. Hence a Frenchman, whose raillery, as it is, finds so little comprehension, would wither in a foreign land like an uprooted tree. Emigration is counter to the instincts of the

French nation. Many Frenchmen, of the kind here in question, have owned to pleasure at seeing the custom-house officers of their native land, which may seem the most daring hyperbole of patriotism.

This little preamble is intended to recall to such Frenchmen as have traveled the extreme pleasure they have felt on occasionally finding their native land, like an oasis, in the drawing-room of some diplomat: a pleasure hard to be understood by those who have never left the asphalt of the Boulevard des Italiens, and to whom the Quais of the left bank of the Seine are not really Paris. To find Paris again! Do you know what that means, O Parisians? It is to find—not indeed the cookery of the Rocher de Cancale as Borel elaborates it for those who can appreciate it, for that exists only in the Rue Montorgueil—but a meal which reminds you of it! It is to find the wines of France, which out of France are to be regarded as myths, and as rare as the woman of whom I write! It is to find —not the most fashionable pleasantry, for it loses its aroma between Paris and the frontier—but the witty, understanding, the critical atmosphere in which the French live, from the poet down to the artisan, from the duchess to the boy in the street.

In 1836, when the Sardinian Court was residing at Genoa, two Parisians, more or less famous, could fancy themselves still in Paris when they found themselves in a palazzo, taken by the French Consul-General, on the hill forming the last fold of the Apennines between the gate of San Tomaso and the well-known lighthouse, which is to be seen in all the keepsake views of Genoa. This palazzo is one of the magnificent villas on which the Genoese nobles were wont to spend millions at the time when the aristocratic republic was a power.

If the early night is beautiful anywhere, it surely is at Genoa, after it has rained as it can rain there, in torrents, all the morning; when the clearness of the sea vies with that of the sky; when silence reigns on the quay and in the groves of the villa, and over the marble heads with yawning jaws, from which water mysteriously flows; when the stars are beaming; when the waves of the Mediterranean lap one after another like the avowal of a woman, from whom you drag it word by word. It must be confessed, that the moment when the perfumed air brings fragrance to the lungs and to our day-dreams; when voluptuousness, made visible and ambient as the air, holds you in your easy-chair; when, a spoon in your hand, you sip an ice or a sorbet, the town at your feet and fair women opposite—such Boccaccio hours can be known only in Italy and on the shores of the Mediterranean.

Imagine to yourself, round the table, the Marquis di Negro, a knight hospitaler to all men of talent on their travels, and the Marquis Damaso Pareto, two Frenchmen disguised as Genoese, a Consul-General with a wife as beautiful as a Madonna, and two silent children—silent because sleep as fallen on them—the French ambassador and his wife, a secretary to the Embassy who believes himself to be crushed and mischievous; finally, two Parisians, who have come to take leave of the Consul's wife at a splendid dinner, and you will

have the picture presented by the terrace of the villa about the middle of May—a picture in which the predominant figure was that of a celebrated woman, on whom all eyes centered now and again, the heroine of this improvised festival.

One of the two Frenchmen was the famous landscape painter, Léon de Lora; the other a well-known critic, Claude Vignon. They had both come with this lady, one of the glories of the fair sex, Mademoiselle des Touches, known in the literary world by the name of Camille Maupin.

Mademoiselle des Touches had been to Florence on business. With the charming kindness of which she is prodigal she had brought with her Léon de Lora to show him Italy, and had gone on as far as Rome that he might see the Campagna. She had come by the Simplon, and was returning by the Cornice road to Marseilles. She had stopped at Genoa, again on the landscape painter's account. The Consul-General had, of course, wished to do the honors of Genoa, before the arrival of the Court, to a woman whose wealth, name, and position recommend her no less than her talents. Camille Maupin, who knew her Genoa down to its smallest chapels, had left her landscape painter to the care of the diplomat and the two Genoese marquises, and was miserly of her minutes. Though the Ambassador was a distinguished man of letters, the celebrated lady had refused to yield to his advances, dreading what the English call an exhibition; but she had drawn in the claws of her refusals when it was proposed that they should spend a farewell day at the Consul's villa. Léon de Lora had told Camille that her presence at the villa was the only return he could make to the Ambassador and his wife, the two Genoese nobelemen, the Consul and his wife. So Mademoiselle des Touches had sacrificed one of those days of perfect freedom, which are not always to be had in Paris by those on whom the world has its eye.

Now the meeting being accounted for, it is easy to understand that etiquette had been banished, as well as a great many women even of the highest rank, who were curious to know whether Camille Maupin's manly talent impaired her grace as a pretty woman, and to see, in a word, whether the trousers showed below her petticoats. After dinner till nine o'clock, when a collation was served, though the conversation had been gay and grave by turns, and constantly enlivened by Léon de Lora's sallies—for he is considered the most roguish wit of Paris to-day—and by the good taste which will surprise no one after the list of guests, literature had scarcely been mentioned. However, the butterfly flittings of this French tilting match were certain to come to it, were it only to flutter over this essentially French subject. But before coming to the turn in the conversation which led the Consul-General to speak, it will not be out of place to give some account of him and his family.

This diplomat, a man of four-and-thirty, who had been married about six years, was the living portrait of Lord Byron. The familiarity of that face makes a description of the Consul's unnecessary. It may, however, be noted that there was no affectation in his dreamy expression. Lord Byron was a

poet, and the Consul-General was poetical; women know and recognize the difference, which explains without justifying some of their attachments. His handsome face, thrown into relief by a delightful nature, had captivated a Genoese heiress. A Genoese heiress! the expression might raise a smile at Genoa, where, in consequence of the inability of daughters to inherit, a woman is rarely rich; but Onorina Pedrotti, the only child of a banker without heirs male, was an exception. Notwithstanding all the flattering advances prompted by a spontaneous passion, the Consul-General had not seemed to wish to marry. Nevertheless, after living in the town for two years, and after certain steps taken by the Ambassador during his visits to the Genoese Court, the marriage was decided on. The young man withdrew his former refusal, less on account of the touching affection of Onorina Pedrotti than by reason of an unknown incident, one of those crises of private life which are so instantly buried under the daily tide of interests that, at a subsequent date, the most natural actions seem inexplicable.

This involution of causes sometimes affects the most serious events of history. This, at any rate, was the opinion of the town of Genoa, where, to some women, the extreme reserve, the melancholy of the French Consul could be explained only by the word passion. It may be remarked, in passing, that women never complain of being the victims of a preference; they are very ready to immolate themselves for the common weal. Onorina Pedrotti, who might have hated the Consul if she had been altogether scorned, loved her *sposo* no less, and perhaps more, when she knew that he had loved. Women allow precedence in love affairs. All is well if other women are in question.

A man is not a diplomat with impunity: the *sposo* was as secret as the grave—so secret that the merchants of Genoa chose to regard the young Consul's attitude as premeditated, and the heiress might perhaps have slipped through his fingers if he had not played his part of a love-sick *malade imaginaire*. If it was real, the women thought it too degrading to be believed.

Pedrotti's daughter gave him her love as a consolation; she lulled these unknown griefs in a cradle of tenderness and Italian caresses.

Il Signor Pedrotti had indeed no reason to complain of the choice to which he was driven by his beloved child. Powerful protectors in Paris watched over the young diplomat's fortunes. In accordance with a promise made by the Ambassador to the Consul-General's father-in-law, the young man was created Baron and Commander of the Legion of Honor. Signor Pedrotti himself was made a Count by the King of Sardinia. Onorina's dower was a million of francs. As to the fortune of the Casa Pedrotti, estimated at two millions, made in the corn trade, the young couple came into it within six months of their marriage, for the first and last Count Pedrotti died in January 1831.

Onorina Pedrotti is one of those beautiful Genoese women who, when they are beautiful, are the most magnificent creatures in Italy. Michael Angelo took his models in Genoa for the tomb of Giuliano. Hence the fullness and singu-

lar placing of the breast in the figures of Day and Night, which so many critics have thought exaggerated, but which is peculiar to the women of Liguria. A Genoese beauty is no longer to be found excepting under the *mezzaro,* as at Venice it is met with only under the *fazzioli.* This phenomenon is observed among all fallen nations. The noble type survives only among the populace, as after the burning of a town coins are found hidden in the ashes. And Onorina, an exception as regards her fortune, is no less an exceptional patrician beauty. Recall to mind the figure of Night which Michael Angelo has placed at the feet of the *Pensieroso,* dress her in modern garb, twist that long hair round the magnificent head, a little dark in complexion, set a spark of fire in those dreamy eyes, throw a scarf about the massive bosom, see the long dress, white, embroidered with flowers, imagine the statue sitting upright, with her arms folded like those of Mademoiselle Georges, and you will see before you the Consul's wife, with a boy of six, as handsome as a mother's desire, and a little girl of four on her knees, as beautiful as the type of childhood so laboriously sought out by the sculptor David to grace a tomb.

This beautiful family was the object of Camille's secret study. It struck Mademoiselle des Touches that the Consul looked rather too absent-minded for a perfectly happy man.

Although, throughout the day, the husband and wife had offered her the pleasing spectacle of complete happiness, Camille wondered why one of the most superior men she had ever met, and whom she had seen too in Paris drawing-rooms, remained as Consul-General at Genoa when he possessed a fortune of a hundred odd thousand francs a year. But, at the same time, she had discerned, by many of the little nothings which women perceive with the intelligence of the Arab sage in *Zadig,* that the husband was faithfully devoted. These two handsome creatures would no doubt love each other without a misunderstanding till the end of their days. So Camille said to herself alternately, "What is wrong?—Nothing is wrong," following the misleading symptoms of the Consul's demeanor; and he, it may be said, had the absolute calmness of Englishmen, of savages, of Orientals, and of consummate diplomatists.

In discussing literature, they spoke of the perennial stock-in-trade of the republic of letters—woman's sin. And they presently found themselves confronted by two opinions: When a woman sins, is the man or the woman to blame? The three women present—the Ambassadress, the Consul's wife, and Mademoiselle des Touches, women, of course, of blameless reputations—were without pity for the woman. The men tried to convince these three fair flowers of their sex that some virtues might remain in a woman after she had fallen.

"How long are we going to play at hide-and-seek in this way?" said Léon de Lora.

"*Cara vita,* go and put your children to bed, and send me by Gina the little black pocket-book that lies on my Boule cabinet," said the Consul to his wife.

She rose without a reply, which shows that she loved her husband very truly, for she already knew French enough to

understand that her husband was getting rid of her.

"I will tell you a story in which I played a part, and after that we can discuss it, for it seems to me childish to practice with the scalpel on an imaginary body. Begin by dissecting a corpse."

Everyone prepared to listen, with all the greater readiness because they had all talked enough, and this is the moment to be chosen for telling a story. This, then, is the Consul-General's tale:—

"When I was two-and-twenty, and had taken my degree in law, my old uncle, the Abbé Loraux, then seventy-two years old, felt it necessary to provide me with a protector, and to start me in some career. This excellent man, if not indeed a saint, regarded each year of his life as a fresh gift from God. I need not tell you that the father confessor of a Royal Highness had no difficulty in finding a place for a young man brought up by himself, his sister's only child. So one day, towards the end of the year 1824, this venerable old man, who for five years had been Curé of the White Friars at Paris, came up to the room I had in his house, and said—

"'Get yourself dressed, my dear boy; I am going to introduce you to someone who is willing to engage you as secretary. If I am not mistaken, he may fill my place in the event of God's taking me to Himself. I shall have finished mass by nine o'clock; you have three-quarters of an hour before you. Be ready.'

"'What, uncle! must I say good-by to this room, where for four years I have been so happy?'

"'I have no fortune to leave you,' said he.

"'Have you not the reputation of your name to leave me, the memory of your good works——?'

"'We need say nothing of that inheritance,' he replied, smiling. 'You do not yet know enough of the world to be aware that a legacy of that kind is hardly likely to be paid, whereas by taking you this morning to M. le Comte'—Allow me," said the Consul, interrupting himself, "to speak of my protector by his Christian name only, and to call him Comte Octave.—'By taking you this morning to M. le Comte Octave, I hope to secure you his patronage, which, if you are so fortunate as to please that virtuous statesman—as I make no doubt you can—will be worth, at least, as much as the fortune I might have accumulated for you, if my brother-in-law's ruin and my sister's death had not fallen on me like a thunderbolt from a clear sky.'

"'Are you the Count's director?'

"'If I were, could I place you with him? What priest could be capable of taking advantage of the secrets which he learns at the tribunal of repentance? No; you owe this position to his Highness, the Keeper of the Seals. My dear Maurice, you will be as much at home there as in your father's house. The Count will give you a salary of two thousand four hundred francs, rooms in his house, and an allowance of twelve hundred francs in lieu of feeding you. He will not admit you to his table, nor give you a separate table, for fear of leaving you to the care of servants. I

did not accept the offer when it was made to me till I was perfectly certain that Comte Octave's secretary was never to be a mere upper servant. You will have an immense amount of work, for the Count is a great worker; but when you leave him, you will be qualified to fill the highest posts. I need not warn you to be discreet; that is the first virtue of any man who hopes to hold public appointments.'

"You may conceive of my curiosity. Comte Octave, at that time, held one of the highest legal appointments; he was in the confidence of Madame the Dauphiness, who had just got him made a State Minister; he led such a life as the Comte de Sérizy, whom you all know, I think; but even more quietly, for his house was in the Marais, Rue Payenne, and he hardly ever entertained. His private life escaped public comment by its hermit-like simplicity and by constant hard work.

"Let me describe my position to you in a few words. Having found in the solemn headmaster of the Collège Saint-Louis a tutor to whom my uncle delegated his authority, at the age of eighteen I had gone through all the classes; I left school as innocent as a seminarist, full of faith, on quitting Saint-Sulpice. My mother, on her deathbed, had made my uncle promise that I should not become a priest, but I was as pious as though I had to take orders. On leaving college, the Abbé Loraux took me into the house and made me study law. During the four years of study requisite for passing all the examinations, I worked hard, but chiefly at things outside the arid fields of jurisprudence. Weaned from literature as I had been at college, where I lived in the headmaster's house, I had a thirst to quench. As soon as I had read a few modern masterpieces, the works of all the preceding ages were greedily swallowed. I became crazy about the theater, and for a long time I went every night to the play, though my uncle gave me only a hundred francs a month. This parsimony, to which the good old man was compelled by his regard for the poor, had the effect of keeping a young man's desires within reasonable limits.

"When I went to live with Comte Octave I was not indeed an innocent, but I thought of my rare escapades as crimes. My uncle was so truly angelic, and I was so much afraid of grieving him that in all those four years I had never spent a night out. The good man would wait till I came in to go to bed. This maternal care had more power to keep me within bounds than the sermons and reproaches with which the life of a young man is diversified in a puritanical home. I was a stranger to the various circles which make up the world of Paris society; I only knew some women of the better sort, and none of the inferior class but those I saw as I walked about, or in the boxes at the play, and then only from the depths of the pit where I sat. If, at that period, anyone had said to me, 'You will see Canalis, or Camille Maupin,' I should have felt hot coals in my head and in my bowels. Famous people were to me as gods, who neither spoke, nor walked, nor ate like other mortals.

"How many tales of the Thousand-and-one Nights are comprehended in the ripening of a youth! How many wonderful lamps must we have rubbed

before we understand that the True Wonderful Lamp is either luck, or work, or genius. In some men this dream of the aroused spirit is but brief; mine has lasted until now! In those days I always went to sleep as Grand Duke of Tuscany,—as a millionaire,—as beloved by a princess,—or famous! So to enter the service of Comte Octave, and have a hundred louis a year, was entering on independent life. I had glimpses of some chance of getting into society, and seeking for what my heart desired most, a protectress, who would rescue me from the paths of danger, which a young man of two-and-twenty can hardly help treading, however prudent and well brought up he may be. I began to be afraid of myself.

"The persistent study of other people's rights into which I had plunged was not always enough to repress painful imaginings. Yes, sometimes in fancy I threw myself into theatrical life; I thought I could be a great actor; I dreamed of endless triumphs and loves, knowing nothing of the disillusion hidden behind the curtain, as everywhere else—for every stage has its reverse behind the scenes. I have gone out sometimes, my heart boiling, carried away by an impulse to rush hunting through Paris, to attach myself to some handsome woman I might meet, to follow her to her door, watch her, write to her, throw myself on her mercy, and conquer her by sheer force of passion. My poor uncle, a heart consumed by charity, a child of seventy years, as clear-sighted as God, as guileless as a man of genius, no doubt read the tumult of my soul; for when he felt the tether by which he held me strained too tightly and ready to break, he would never fail to say, 'Here, Maurice, you too are poor! Here are twenty francs; go and amuse yourself, you are not a priest!' And if you could then have seen the dancing light that gilded his gray eyes, the smile that relaxed his fine lips, puckering the corners of his mouth, the adorable expression of that august face, whose native ugliness was redeemed by the spirit of an apostle, you would understand the feeling which made me answer the Curé of White Friars only with a kiss, as if he had been my mother.

"'In Comte Octave you will find not a master, but a friend,' said my uncle on the way to the Rue Payenne, 'But he is distrustful, or to be more exact, he is cautious. The statesman's friendship can be won only with time; for in spite of his deep insight and his habit of gauging men, he was deceived by the man you are succeeding, and nearly became a victim to his abuse of confidence. This is enough to guide you in your behavior to him.'

"When we knocked at the enormous outer door of a house as large as the Hôtel Carnavalet, with a courtyard in front and a garden behind, the sound rang as in a desert. While my uncle inquired of an old porter in livery if the Count were at home, I cast my eyes, seeing everything at once, over the courtyard where the cobblestones were hidden in grass, the blackened walls where little gardens were flourishing above the decorations of the elegant architecture, and on the roof, as high as that of the Tuileries. The balustrade of the upper balconies was eaten away. Through a magnificent colonnade I

could see a second court on one side, where were the offices; the door was rotting. An old coachman was there cleaning an old carriage. The indifferent air of this servant allowed me to assume that the handsome stables, where of old so many horses had whinnied, now sheltered two at most. The handsome façade of the house seemed to me gloomy, like that of a mansion belonging to the State or the Crown, and given up to some public office. A bell rang as we walked across, my uncle and I, from the porter's lodge—*Enquire of the Porter* was still written over the door—towards the outside steps, where a footman came out in a livery like that of Labranche at the Théâtre Français in the old stock plays. A visitor was so rare that the servant was putting his coat on when he opened a glass door with small panes, on each side of which the smoke of a lamp had traced patterns on the walls.

"A hall so magnificent as to be worthy of Versailles ended in a staircase such as will never again be built in France, taking up as much space as the whole of a modern house. As we went up the marble steps, as cold as tombstones, and wide enough for eight persons to walk abreast, our tread echoed under sonorous vaulting. The banister charmed the eye by its miraculous workmanship—goldsmith's work in iron—wrought by the fancy of an artist of the time of Henri III. Chilled as by an icy mantle that fell on our shoulders, we went through anterooms, drawing-rooms opening one out of the other, with carpetless parquet floors, and furnished with such splendid antiquities as from thence would find their way to the curiosity dealers. At last we reached a large study in a cross wing, with all the windows looking into an immense garden.

"'Monsieur le Curé of the White Friars, and his nephew, Monsieur de l'Hostal,' said Labranche, to whose care the other theatrical servant had consigned us in the first antechamber.

"Comte Octave, dressed in long trousers and a gray flannel morning coat, rose from his seat by a huge writing-table, came to the fireplace, and signed to me to sit down, while he went forward to take my uncle's hands, which he pressed.

"'Though I am in the parish of Saint-Paul,' said he, 'I could scarcely have failed to hear of the Curé of the White Friars, and I am happy to make his acquaintance.'

"'Your Excellency is most kind,' replied my uncle. 'I have brought to you my only remaining relation. While I believe that I am offering a good gift to your Excellency, I hope at the same time to give my nephew a second father.'

"'As to that, I can only reply, Monsieur l'Abbé, when we shall have tried each other,' said Comte Octave. 'Your name?' he added, to me.

"'Maurice.'

"'He has taken his doctor's degree in law,' my uncle observed.

"'Very good, very good!' said the Count, looking at me from head to foot. 'Monsieur l'Abbé, I hope that for your nephew's sake in the first instance, and then for mine, you will do me the honor of dining here every Monday. That will be our family dinner, our family party.'

"My uncle and the Count then began

to talk of religion from the political point of view, of charitable institutes, the repression of crime, and I could at my leisure study the man on whom my fate would henceforth depend. The Count was of middle height; it was impossible to judge of his build on account of his dress, but he seemed to me to be lean and spare. His face was harsh and hollow; the features were refined. His mouth, which was rather large, expressed both irony and kindliness. His forehead, perhaps too spacious, was as intimidating as that of a madman, all the more so from the contrast of the lower part of the face, which ended squarely in a short chin very near the lower lip. Small eyes, of turquoise blue, were as keen and bright as those of the Prince de Talleyrand—which I admired at a later time—and endowed, like the Prince's, with the faculty of becoming expressionless to the verge of gloom; and they added to the singularity of a face that was not pale but yellow. This complexion seemed to bespeak an irritable temper and violent passions. His hair, already silvered, and carefully dressed, seemed to furrow his head with streaks of black and white alternately. The trimness of this head spoiled the resemblance I had remarked in the Count to the wonderful monk described by Lewis after Schedoni in the *Confessional of the Black Penitents (The Italian)*, a superior creation, as it seems to me, to *The Monk*.

"The Count was already shaved, having to attend early at the law courts. Two candelabra with four lights, screened by lamp-shades, were still burning at the opposite ends of the writing-table, and showed plainly that the magistrate rose long before daylight. His hands, which I saw when he took hold of the bell-pull to summon his servant, were extremely fine, and as white as a woman's.

"As I tell you this story," said the Consul-General, interrupting himself, "I am altering the titles and the social position of this gentleman, while placing him in circumstances analogous to what his really were. His profession, rank, luxury, fortune, and style of living were the same; all these details are true, but I will not be false to my benefactor, nor to my usual habits of discretion.

"Instead of feeling—as I really was, socially speaking—an insect in the presence of an eagle," the narrator went on after a pause, "I felt I know not what indefinable impression from the Count's appearance, which, however, I can now account for. Artists of genius" (and he bowed gracefully to the Ambassador, the distinguished lady, and the two Frenchmen), "real statesmen, poets, a general who has commanded armies—in short, all really great minds are simple, and their simplicity places you on a level with themselves.—You who are all of superior minds," he said, addressing his guests, "have perhaps observed how feeling can bridge over the distances created by society. If we are inferior to you in intellect, we can be your equals in devoted friendship. By the temperature—allow me the word—of our hearts I felt myself as near my patron as I was far below him in rank. In short, the soul has its clairvoyance; it has presentiments of suffering, grief, joy, antagonism, or hatred in others.

"I vaguely discerned the symptoms of a mystery, from recognizing in the

Count the same effect of physiognomy as I had observed in my uncle. The exercise of virtue, serenity of conscience, and purity of mind had transfigured my uncle, who from being ugly had become quite beautiful. I detected a metamorphosis of a reverse kind in the Count's face; at the first glance I thought he was about fifty-five, but after an attentive examination I found youth entombed under the ice of a great sorrow, under the fatigue of persistent study, under the glowing hues of some suppressed passion. At a word from my uncle the Count's eyes recovered for a moment the softness of the periwinkle flower, and he had an admiring smile, which revealed what I believed to be his real age, about forty. These observations I made, not then but afterwards, as I recalled the circumstances of my visit.

"The man-servant came in carrying a tray with his master's breakfast on it.

"'I did not ask for breakfast,' remarked the Count; 'but leave it, and show Monsieur to his rooms.'

"I followed the servant, who led the way to a complete set of pretty rooms, under a terrace, between the great courtyard and the servants' quarters, over a corridor of communication between the kitchens and grand staircase. When I returned to the Count's study, I overheard, before opening the door, my uncle pronouncing this judgment on me—

"'He may do wrong, for he has strong feelings, and we are all liable to honorable mistakes; but he has no vices.'

"'Well,' said the Count, with a kindly look, 'do you like yourself there? Tell me. There are so many rooms in this barrack that, if you were not comfortable, I could put you elsewhere.'

"'At my uncle's I had but one room,' replied I.

"'Well, you can settle yourself this evening,' said the Count, 'for your possessions, no doubt, are such as all students own, and a hackney coach will be enough to convey them. To-day we will all three dine together,' and he looked at my uncle.

"A splendid library opened from the Count's study, and he took us in there, showing me a pretty little recess decorated with paintings, which had formerly served, no doubt, as an oratory.

"'This is your cell,' said he. 'You will sit there when you have to work with me, for you will not be tethered by a chain'; and he explained in detail the kind and duration of my employment with him. As I listened I felt that he was a great political teacher.

"It took me about a month to familiarize myself with people and things, to learn the duties of my new office, and accustom myself to the Count's methods. A secretary necessarily watches the man who makes use of him. That man's tastes, passions, temper, and manias become the subject of involuntary study. The union of their two minds is at once more and less than a marriage.

"During these months the Count and I reciprocally studied each other. I learned with astonishment that Comte Octave was but thirty-seven years old. The merely superficial peacefulness of his life and the propriety of his conduct were the outcome not solely of a deep sense of duty and of stoical reflection; in my constant intercourse with this

man—an extraordinary man to those who knew him well—I felt vast depths beneath his toil, beneath his acts of politeness, his mask of benignity, his assumption of resignation, which so closely resembled calmness that it was easy to mistake it. Just as when walking through forest-lands certain soils give forth under our feet a sound which enables us to guess whether they are dense masses of stone or a void; so intense egoism, though hidden under the flowers of politeness, and subterranean caverns eaten out by sorrow sound hollow under the constant touch of familiar life. It was sorrow and not despondency that dwelt in that really great soul. The Count had understood that action, deeds, are the supreme law of social man. And he went on his way in spite of secret wounds, looking to the future with a tranquil eye, like a martyr full of faith.

"His concealed sadness, the bitter disenchantment from which he suffered, had not led him into philosophical deserts of incredulity; this brave statesman was religious, but without ostentation; he always attended the earliest mass at Saint-Paul's for pious workmen and servants. Not one of his friends, no one at Court, knew that he so punctually fulfilled the practice of religion. He was addicted to God as some men are addicted to a vice, with the greatest mystery. Thus one day I came to find the Count at the summit of an Alp of woe much higher than that on which many are who think themselves the most tried; who laugh at the passions and the beliefs of others because they have conquered their own; who play variations in every key of irony and disdain. He did not mock at those who still follow hope into the swamps whither she leads, nor those who climb a peak to be alone, nor those who persist in the fight, reddening the arena with their blood and strewing it with their illusions. He looked on the world as a whole; he mastered its beliefs; he listened to its complaining; he was doubtful of affection, and yet more of self-sacrifice; but this great and stern judge pitied them, or admired them, not with transient enthusiasm, but with silence, concentration, and the communion of a deeply-touched soul. He was a sort of catholic Manfred, and unstained by crime, carrying his choiceness into his faith, melting the snows by fires of a sealed volcano, holding converse with a star seen by himself alone!

"I detected many dark riddles in his ordinary life. He evaded my gaze not like a traveler who, following a path, disappears from time to time in dells or ravines according to the formation of the soil, but like a sharp-shooter who is being watched, who wants to hide himself, and seeks a cover. I could not account for his frequent absences at the times when he was working the hardest, and of which he made no secret from me, for he would say, 'Go on with this for me,' and trust me with the work in hand.

"This man, wrapped in the threefold duties of the statesman, the judge, and the orator, charmed me by a taste for flowers, which shows an elegant mind, and which is shared by almost all persons of refinement. His garden and his study were full of the rarest plants, but he always bought them half withered.

Perhaps it pleased him to see such an image of his own fate! He was faded like these dying flowers, whose almost decaying fragrance mounted strangely to his brain. The Count loved his country; he devoted himself to public interests with the frenzy of a heart that seeks to cheat some other passion; but the studies and work into which he threw himself were not enough for him; there were frightful struggles in his mind, of which some echoes reached me. Finally, he would give utterance to harrowing aspirations for happiness, and it seemed to me he ought yet to be happy; but what was the obstacle? Was there a woman he loved? This was a question I asked myself. You may imagine the extent of the circles of torment that my mind had searched before coming to so simple and so terrible a question. Notwithstanding his efforts, my patron did not succeed in stifling the movements of his heart. Under his austere manner, under the reserve of the magistrate, a passion rebelled, though coerced with such force that no one but I who lived with him ever guessed the secret. His motto seemed to be, 'I suffer, and am silent.' The escort of respect and admiration which attended him; the friendship of workers as valiant as himself—Grandville and Sérizy, both presiding judges—had no hold over the Count: either he told them nothing, or they knew all. Impassible and lofty in public, the Count betrayed the man only on rare intervals when, alone in his garden or his study, he supposed himself unobserved; but then he was a child again, he gave course to the tears hidden beneath the toga, to the excitement which, if wrongly interpreted, might have damaged his credit for perspicacity as a statesman.

"When all this had become to me a matter of certainty, Comte Octave had all the attractions of a problem, and won on my affection as much as though he had been my own father. Can you enter into the feeling of curiosity, tempered by respect? What catastrophe had blasted this learned man, who, like Pitt, had devoted himself from the age of eighteen to the studies indispensable to power, while he had no ambition; this judge, who thoroughly knew the law of nations, political law, civil and criminal law, and who could find in these a weapon against every anxiety, against every mistake; this profound legislator, this serious writer, this pious celibate whose life sufficiently proved that he was open to no reproach? A criminal could not have been more hardly punished by God than was my master; sorrow had robbed him of half his slumbers; he never slept more than four hours. What struggle was it that went on in the depths of these hours apparently so calm, so studious, passing without a sound or a murmur, during which I often detected him, when the pen had dropped from his fingers, with his head resting on one hand, his eyes like two fixed stars, and sometimes wet with tears? How could the waters of that living spring flow over the burning strand without being dried up by the subterranean fire? Was there below it, as there is under the sea, between it and the central fire of the globe, a bed of granite? And would the volcano burst at last?

"Sometimes the Count would give me a look of that sagacious and keen-eyed

curiosity by which one man searches another when he desires an accomplice; then he shunned my eye as he saw it open a mouth, so to speak, insisting on a reply, and seeming to say, 'Speak first!' Now and then Comte Octave's melancholy was surly and gruff. If these spurts of temper offended me, he could get over it without thinking of asking my pardon; but then his manners were gracious to the point of Christian humility.

"When I became attached like a son to this man—to me such a mystery, but so intelligible to the outer world, to whom the epithet eccentric is enough to account for all the enigmas of the heart—I changed the state of the house. Neglect of his own interests was carried by the Count to the length of folly in the management of his affairs. Possessing an income of about a hundred and sixty thousand francs, without including the emoluments of his appointments—three of which did not come under the law against plurality—he spent sixty thousand, of which at least thirty thousand went to his servants. By the end of the first year I had got rid of all these rascals, and begged His Excellency to use his influence in helping me to get honest servants. By the end of the second year the Count, better fed and better served, enjoyed the comforts of modern life; he had fine horses, supplied by a coachman to whom I paid so much a month for each horse; his dinners on his reception days, furnished by Chevet at a price agreed upon, did him credit; his daily meals were prepared by an excellent cook found by my uncle, and helped by two kitchenmaids. The expenditure for housekeeping, not including purchases, was no more than thirty thousand francs a year; we had two additional menservants, whose care restored the poetical aspect of the house; for this old palace, splendid even in its rust, had an air of dignity which neglect had dishonored.

"'I am no longer astonished,' said he, on hearing of these results, 'at the fortunes made by my servants. In seven years I have had two cooks, who have become rich restaurant-keepers.'

"'And in seven years you have lost a hundred thousand francs,' replied I. 'You, a judge, who in your court sign summonses against crime, encouraged robbery in your own house.'

"Early in the year 1826 the Count had, no doubt, ceased to watch me, and we were as closely attached as two men can be when one is subordinate to the other. He had never spoken to me of my future prospects, but he had taken an interest, both as a master and as a father, in training me. He often required me to collect materials for his most arduous labors; I drew up some of his reports, and he corrected them, showing the difference between his interpretation of the law, his views and mine. When at last I had produced a document which he could give in as his own he was delighted; this satisfaction was my reward, and he could see that I took it so. This little incident produced an extraordinary effect on a soul which seemed so stern. The Count pronounced sentence on me, to use a legal phrase, as supreme and royal judge; he took my head in his hands, and kissed me on the forehead.

"'Maurice,' he exclaimed, 'you are no

longer my apprentice; I know not yet what you will be to me—but if no change occurs in my life, perhaps you will take the place of a son.'

"Comte Octave had introduced me to the best houses in Paris, whither I went in his stead, with his servants and carriage, on the too frequent occasions when, on the point of starting, he changed his mind, and sent for a hackney cab to take him—Where?—that was the mystery. But the welcome I met with I could judge of the Count's feelings towards me, and the earnestness of his recommendations. He supplied all my wants with the thoughtfulness of a father, and with all the greater liberality because my modesty left it to him always to think of me. Towards the end of January 1827, at the house of the Comtesse de Sérizy, I had such persistent ill-luck at play that I lost two thousand francs, and I would not draw them out of my savings. Next morning I asked myself, 'Had I better ask my uncle for the money, or put my confidence in the Count?'

"I decided on the second alternative.

"'Yesterday,' said I, when he was at breakfast, 'I lost persistently at play; I was provoked, and went on; I owe two thousand francs. Will you allow me to draw the sum on account of my year's salary?'

"'No,' said he, with the sweetest smile; 'when a man plays in society, he must have a gambling purse. Draw six thousand francs; pay your debts. Henceforth we must go halves; for since you are my representative on most occasions, your self-respect must not be made to suffer for it.'

"I made no speech of thanks. Thanks would have been superfluous between us. This shade shows the character of our relations. And yet we had not yet unlimited confidence in each other; he did not open to me the vast subterranean chambers which I had detected in his secret life; and I, for my part, never said to him. 'What ails you? From what are you suffering?'

"What could he be doing during those long evenings? He would often come in on foot, or in a hackney cab, when I returned in a carriage—I, his secretary! Was so pious a man a prey to vices hidden under hypocrisy? Did he expend all the powers of his mind to satisfy a jealousy more dexterous than Othello's? Did he live with some woman unworthy of him? One morning, on returning from, I have forgotten what shop, where I had just paid a bill, between the Church of Saint-Paul and the Hôtel de Ville, I came across Comte Octave in such eager conversation with an old woman that he did not see me. The appearance of this hag filled me with strange suspicions, suspicions that were all the better founded because I never found that the Count invested his savings. Is it not shocking to think of? I was constituting myself my patron's censor. At that time I knew that he had more than six hundred thousand francs to invest; and if he had bought securities of any kind, his confidence in me was so complete in all that concerned his pecuniary interests, that I certainly should have known it.

"Sometimes, in the morning, the Count took exercise in his garden, to and fro, like a man to whom a walk is the hippogryph ridden by dreamy

melancholy. He walked and walked! And he rubbed his hands enough to rub the skin off. And then, if I met him unexpectedly as he came to the angle of a path, I saw his face beaming. His eyes, instead of the hardness of a turquoise, had that velvet softness of the blue periwinkle, which had so much struck me on the occasion of my first visit, by reason of the astonishing contrast in the two different looks: the look of a happy man, and the look of an unhappy man. Two or three times at such a moment he had taken me by the arm and led me on; then he had said, 'What have you come to ask?' instead of pouring out his joy into my heart that opened to him. But more often, especially since I could do his work for him and write his reports, the unhappy man would sit for hours staring at the gold fish that swarmed in a handsome marble basin in the middle of the garden, round which grew an amphitheater of the finest flowers. He, an accomplished statesman, seemed to have succeeded in making a passion of the mechanical amusement of crumbling bread to fishes.

"This is how the drama was disclosed of this second inner life, so deeply ravaged and storm-tossed, where, in a circle overlooked by Dante in his *Inferno*, horrible joys had their birth."

The Consul-General paused.

"On a certain Monday," he resumed, "as chance would have it, M. le Président de Grandville and M. de Sérizy (at that time Vice-President of the Council of State) had come to hold a meeting at Comte Octave's house. They formed a committee of three, of which I was the secretary. The Count had already got me the appointment of Auditor to the Council of State. All the documents requisite for their inquiry into the political matter privately submitted to these three gentlemen were laid out on one of the long tables in the library. MM. de Grandville and de Sérizy had trusted to the Count to make the preliminary examination of the papers relating to the matter. To avoid the necessity for carrying all the papers to M. de Sérizy, as president of the commission, it was decided that they should meet first in the Rue Payenne. The Cabinet at the Tuileries attached great importance to this piece of work, of which the chief burden fell on me—and to which I owed my appointment, in the course of that year, to be Master of Appeals.

"Though the Comtes de Grandville and de Sérizy, whose habits were much the same as my patron's, never dined away from home, we were still discussing the matter at a late hour, when we were startled by the man-servant calling me aside to say, 'MM. the Curés of Saint-Paul and of the White Friars have been waiting in the drawing-room for two hours.'

"It was nine o'clock.

"'Well, gentlemen, you find yourselves compelled to dine with priests,' said Comte Octave to his colleagues. 'I do not know whether Grandville can overcome his horror of a priest's gown——'

"'It depends on the priest.'

"'One of them is my uncle, and the other is the Abbé Gaudron,' said I. 'Do not be alarmed; the Abbé Fontanon

is no longer second priest at Saint-Paul——'

"'Well, let us dine,' replied the Président de Grandville. 'A bigot frightens me, but there is no one so cheerful as a truly pious man.'

"We went into the drawing-room. The dinner was delightful. Men of real information, politicians to whom business gives both consummate experience and the practice of speech, are admirable story-tellers, when they tell stories. With them there is no medium; they are either heavy, or they are sublime. In this delightful sport Prince Metternich is as good as Charles Nodier. The fun of a statesman, cut in facets like a diamond, is sharp, sparkling, and full of sense. Being sure that the proprieties would be observed by these three superior men, my uncle allowed his wit full play, a refined wit, gentle, penetrating, and elegant, like that of all men who are accustomed to conceal their thoughts under the black robe. And you may rely upon it, there was nothing vulgar nor idle in this light talk, which I would compare, for its effect on the soul, to Rossini's music.

"The Abbé Gaudron was, as M. de Grandville said, a Saint Peter rather than a Saint Paul, a peasant full of faith, as square on his feet as he was tall, a sacerdotal whose ignorance in matters of the world and of literature enlivened the conversation by guileless amazement and unexpected questions. They came to talking of one of the plague spots of social life, of which we were just now speaking—adultery. My uncle remarked on the contradiction which the legislators of the Code, still feeling the blows of the revolutionary storm, had established between civil and religious law, and which he said was at the root of all the mischief.

"'In the eyes of the Church,' said he, 'adultery is a crime; in those of your tribunals it is a misdemeanor. Adultery drives to the police court in a carriage instead of standing at the bar to be tried. Napoleon's Council of State, touched with tenderness towards erring women, was quite inefficient. Ought they not in this case to have harmonized the civil and the religious law, and have sent the guilty wife to a convent, as of old?'

"'To a convent!' said M. de Sérizy. 'They must first have created convents, and in those days monasteries were being turned into barracks. Besides, think of what you say, M. l'Abbé—give to God what society would have none of?'

"'Oh!' said the Comte de Grandville, 'you do not know France. They were obliged to leave the husband free to take proceedings: well, there are not ten cases of adultery brought up in a year.'

"'M. l'Abbé preaches for his own saint, for it was Jesus Christ who invented adultery,' said Comte Octave. 'In the East, the cradle of the human race, woman was merely a luxury, and there was regarded as a chattel; no virtues were demanded of her but obedience and beauty. But exalting the soul above the body, the modern family in Europe—a daughter of Christ—invented indissoluble marriage, and made it a sacrament.'

"'Ah! the Church saw all the difficulties,' exclaimed M. de Grandville.

"'This institution has given rise to a

new world,' the Count went on with a smile. 'But the practices of that world will never be that of a climate where women are marriageable at seven years of age, and more than old at five-and-twenty. The Catholic Church overlooked the needs of half the globe.—So let us discuss Europe only.

"'Is woman our superior or our inferior? That is the real question so far as we are concerned. If woman is our inferior, by placing her on so high a level as the Church does, fearful punishments for adultery were needful. And formerly that was what was done. The cloister or death sums up early legislation. But since then practice has modified the law, as is always the case. The throne served as a hotbed for adultery, and the increase of this inviting crime marks the decline of the dogmas of the Catholic Church. In these days, in cases where the Church now exacts no more than sincere repentance from the erring wife, society is satisfied with a brand-mark instead of an execution. The law still condemns the guilty, but it no longer terrifies them. In short, there are two standards of morals: that of the world, and that of the Code. Where the Code is weak, as I admit with our dear Abbé, the world is audacious and satirical. There are so few judges who would not gladly have committed the fault against which they hurl the rather stolid thunders of their 'inasmuch.' The world, which gives the lie to the law alike in its rejoicings, in its habits, and in its pleasures, is severer than the Code and the Church; the world punishes a blunder after encouraging hypocrisy. The whole economy of the law on marriage seems to me to require reconstruction from the bottom to the top. The French law would be perfect perhaps if it excluded daughters from inheriting.'

"'We three among us know the question very thoroughly,' said the Comte de Grandville with a laugh. 'I have a wife I cannot live with. Sérizy has a wife who will not live with him. As for you, Octave, yours ran away from you. So we three represent every case of the conjugal conscience, and, no doubt, if ever divorce is brought in again, we shall form the committee.'

"Octave's fork dropped on his glass, broke it, and broke his plate. He had turned as pale as death, and flashed a thunderous glare at M. de Grandville, by which he hinted at my presence, and which I caught.

"'Forgive me, my dear fellow. I did not see Maurice,' the Président went on. 'Sérizy and I, after being the witnesses to your marriage, became your accomplices; I did not think I was committing an indiscretion in the presence of these two venerable priests.'

"M. de Sérizy changed the subject by relating all he had done to please his wife without ever succeeding. The old man concluded that it was impossible to regulate human sympathies and antipathies; he maintained that social law was never more perfect than when it was nearest to natural law. Now, Nature takes no account of the affinities of souls; her aim is fulfilled by the propagation of the species. Hence, the Code, in its present form, was wise in leaving a wide latitude to chance. The incapacity of daughters to inherit so long as there were male heirs was an excellent provision, whether to hinder the de-

generation of the race, or to make households happier by abolishing scandalous unions and giving the sole preference to moral qualities and beauty.

"'But, then,' he exclaimed, lifting his hand with a gesture of disgust, 'how are we to perfect legislation in a country which insists on bringing together seven or eight hundred legislators!—After all, if I am sacrificed,' he added, 'I have a child to succeed me.'

"'Setting aside all the religious question,' my uncle said, 'I would remark to your Excellency that Nature only owes us life, and that it is society that owes us happiness. Are you a father?' asked my uncle.

"'And I—have I any children?' said Comte Octave in a hollow voice, and his tone made such an impression that there was no more talk of wives or marriage.

"When coffee had been served, the two Counts and the two priests stole away, seeing that poor Octave had fallen into a fit of melancholy, which prevented his noticing their disappearance. My patron was sitting in an arm-chair by the fire, in the attitude of a man crushed.

"'You now know the secret of my life,' said he to me on noticing that we were alone. 'After three years of married life, one evening when I came in I found a letter in which the Countess announced her flight. The letter did not lack dignity, for it is in the nature of women to preserve some virtues even when committing that horrible sin.—The story now is that my wife went abroad in a ship that was wrecked; she is supposed to be dead. I have lived alone for seven years!—Enough for this evening, Maurice. We will talk of my situation when I have grown used to the idea of speaking of it to you. When we suffer from a chronic disease, it needs time to become accustomed to improvement. That improvement often seems to be merely another aspect of the complaint.'

"I went to bed greatly agitated; for the mystery, far from being explained, seemed to me more obscure than ever. I foresaw some strange drama indeed, for I understood that there could be no vulgar difference between the woman the Count could choose and such a character as his. The events which had driven the Countess to leave a man so noble, so amiable, so perfect, so loving, so worthy to be loved, must have been singular, to say the least. M. de Grandville's remark had been like a torch flung into the caverns over which I had so long been walking; and though the flame lighted them but dimly, my eyes could perceive their wide extent! I could imagine the Count's sufferings without knowing their depth or their bitterness. That sallow face, those parched temples, those overwhelming studies, those moments of absent-mindedness, the smallest details of the life of this married bachelor, all stood out in luminous relief during the hour of mental questioning, which is, as it were, the twilight before sleep, and to which any man would have given himself up, as I did.

"Oh! how I loved my poor master! He seemed to me sublime. I read a poem of melancholy, I saw perpetual activity in the heart I had accused of being torpid. Must not supreme grief always come at last to stagnation? Had this judge, who had so much in his power, ever revenged himself? Was he

feeding himself on her long agony? Is it not a remarkable thing in Paris to keep anger always seething for ten years? What had Octave done since this great misfortune—for the separation of husband and wife is a great misfortune in our day, when domestic life has become a social question, which it never was of old?

"We allowed a few days to pass on the watch, for great sorrows have a diffidence of their own; but at last, one evening, the Count said in a grave voice—

"'Stay.'

"This, as nearly as may be, is his story.

"'My father had a ward, rich and lovely, who was sixteen at the time when I came back from college to live in this old house. Honorine, who had been brought up by my mother, was just awaking to life. Full of grace and of childlike ways, she dreamed of happiness as she would have dreamed of jewels; perhaps happiness seemed to her the jewels of the soul. Her piety was not free from puerile pleasures; for everything, even religion, was poetry to her ingenuous heart. She looked to the future as a perpetual fête. Innocent and pure, no delirium had disturbed her dream. Shame and grief had never tinged her cheek nor moistened her eye. She did not even inquire into the secret of her involuntary emotions on a fine spring day. And then, she felt that she was weak and destined to obedience, and she awaited marriage without wishing for it. Her smiling imagination knew nothing of the corruption—necessary perhaps—which literature imparts by depicting the passions; she knew nothing of the world, and was ignorant of all the dangers of society. The dear child had suffered so little that she had not even developed her courage. In short, her guilelessness would have led her to walk fearless among serpents, like the ideal figure of Innocence a painter once created. We lived together like two brothers.

"'At the end of a year I said to her one day, in the garden of this house, by the basin, as we stood throwing crumbs to the fish—

"'"Would you like that we should be married? With me you could do whatever you please, while another man would make you unhappy."

"'"Mamma," said she to my mother, who came out to join us, "Octave and I have agreed to be married——"

"'"What! at seventeen?" said my mother. "No; you must wait eighteen months; and if eighteen months hence you like each other, well, your birth and fortunes are equal, you can make a marriage which is suitable, as well as being a love match."

"'When I was six-and-twenty, and Honorine nineteen, we were married. Our respect for my father and mother, old folks of the Bourbon Court, hindered us from making this house fashionable, or renewing the furniture; we lived on, as we had done in the past, as children. However, I went into society; I initiated my wife into the world of fashion; and I regarded it as one of my duties to instruct her.

"'I recognized afterwards that marriages contracted under such circumstances as ours bear in themselves a rock against which many affections are

wrecked, many prudent calculations, many lives. The husband becomes a pedagogue, or, if you like, a professor, and love perishes under the rod which, sooner or later, gives pain; for a young and handsome wife, at once discreet and laughter-loving, will not accept any superiority above that with which she is endowed by nature. Perhaps I was in the wrong? During the difficult beginnings of a household I, perhaps, assumed a magisterial tone? On the other hand, I may have made the mistake of trusting too entirely to that artless nature; I kept no watch over the Countess, in whom revolt seemed to me impossible. Alas! neither in politics nor in domestic life has it yet been ascertained whether empires and happiness are wrecked by too much confidence or too much severity! Perhaps, again, the husband failed to realize Honorine's girlish dreams? Who can tell, while happy days last, what precepts he has neglected?'

"I remember only the broad outlines of the reproaches the Count addressed to himself, with all the good faith of an anatomist seeking the cause of a disease which might be overlooked by his brethren; but his merciful indulgence struck me then as really worthy of that of Jesus Christ when He rescued the woman taken in adultery.

"'It was eighteen months after my father's death—my mother followed him to the tomb in a few months—when the fearful night came which surprised me by Honorine's farewell letter. What poetic delusion had seduced my wife? Was it through her senses? Was it the magnetism of misfortune or of genius? Which of these powers had taken her by storm or misled her?—I would not know. The blow was so terrible, that for a month I remained stunned. Afterwards, reflection counseled me to continue in ignorance, and Honorine's misfortunes have since taught me too much about all these things.—So far, Maurice, the story is commonplace enough; but one word will change it; I love Honorine, I have never ceased to worship her. From the day when she left me I have lived on memory; one by one I recall the pleasures for which Honorine no doubt had no taste.

"'Oh!' said he, seeing the amazement in my eyes, 'do not make a hero of me, do not think me such a fool, as a Colonel of the Empire would say, as to have sought no diversion. Alas, my boy! I was either too young or too much in love; I have not in the whole world met with another woman. After frightful struggles with myself, I tried to forget; money in hand, I stood on the very threshold of infidelity, but there the memory of Honorine rose before me like a white statue. As I recalled the infinite delicacy of that exquisite skin, through which the blood might be seen coursing and the nerves quivering; as I saw in fancy that ingenuous face, as guileless on the eve of my sorrows as on the day when I said to her, "Shall we marry?" as I remembered a heavenly fragrance, the very odor of virtue, and the light in her eyes, the prettiness of her movements, I fled like a man preparing to violate a tomb, who sees emerging from it the transfigured soul of the dead. At consultations, in Court, by night, I dream so incessantly of Honorine that only by excessive strength of mind do I succeed in attending to

what I am doing and saying. This is the secret of my labors.

"'Well, I felt no more anger with her than a father can feel on seeing his beloved child in some danger it has imprudently rushed into. I understood that I had made a poem of my wife—a poem I delighted in with such intoxication that I fancied she shared the intoxication. Ah! Maurice, an indiscriminating passion in a husband is a mistake that may lead to any crime in a wife. I had no doubt left all the faculties of this child, loved as a child, entirely unemployed; I had perhaps wearied her with my love before the hour of loving had struck for her! Too young to understand that in the constancy of the wife lies the germ of the mother's devotion, she mistook this first test of marriage for life itself, and the refractory child cursed life, unknown to me, not daring to complain to me, out of sheer modesty perhaps! In so cruel a position she would be defenseless against any man who stirred her deeply. —And I, so wise a judge as they say—I, who have a kind heart, but whose mind was absorbed—I understood too late these unwritten laws of the woman's code, I read them by the light of the fire that wrecked my roof. Then I constituted my heart a tribunal by virtue of the law, for the law makes the husband a judge: I acquitted my wife, and I condemned myself. But love took possession of me as a passion, the mean, despotic passion which comes over some old men. At this day I love the absent Honorine as a man of sixty loves a woman whom he must possess at any cost, and yet I feel the strength of a young man. I have the insolence of the old man and the reserve of a boy.—My dear fellow, society only laughs at such a desperate conjugal predicament. Where it pities a lover, it regards a husband as ridiculously inept; it makes sport of those who cannot keep the woman they have secured under the canopy of the Church, and before the Maire's scarf of office. And I had to keep silence.

"'Sérizy is happy. His indulgence allows him to see his wife; he can protect and defend her; and, as he adores her, he knows all the perfect joys of a benefactor whom nothing can disturb, not even ridicule, for he pours it himself on his fatherly pleasures. "I remain married only for my wife's sake," he said to me one day on coming out of court.

"'But I—I have nothing; I have not even to face ridicule, I who live solely on a love which is starving! I who can never find a word to say to a woman of the world! I who loathe prostitution! I who am faithful under a spell!—But for my religious faith, I should have killed myself. I have defied the gulf of hard work; I have thrown myself into it, and come out again alive, fevered, burning, bereft of sleep!——'

"I cannot remember all the words of this eloquent man, to whom passion gave an eloquence indeed so far above that of the pleader that, as I listened to him, like him, felt my cheeks wet with tears. You may conceive of my feelings when, after a pause, during which we dried them away, he finished his story with this revelation—

"'This is the drama of my soul, but it is not the actual living drama which is at this moment being acted in Paris! The interior drama interests nobody. I

know it; and you will one day admit that it is so, you, who at this moment shed tears with me; no one can burden his heart or his skin with another's pain. The measure of our sufferings is in ourselves.—You even understand my sorrows only by very vague analogy. Could you see my calming the most violent frenzy of despair by the contemplation of a miniature in which I can see and kiss her brow, the smile on her lips, the shape of her face, can breathe the whiteness of her skin; which enables me almost to feel, to play with the black masses of her curling hair? Could you see me when I leap with hope—when I writhe under the myriad darts of despair —when I tramp through the mire of Paris to quell my irritation by fatigue? I have fits of collapse comparable to those of a consumptive patient, moods of wild hilarity, terrors as of a murderer who meets a sergeant of police. In short, my life is a continual paroxysm of fears, joy, and dejection.

"'As to the drama—it is this. You imagine that I am occupied with the Council of State, the Chamber, the Courts, Politics.—Why, dear me, seven hours at night are enough for all that, so much are my faculties overwrought by the life I lead! Honorine is my real concern. To recover my wife is my only study; to guard her in her cage, without her suspecting that she is in my power; to satisfy her needs, to supply the little pleasure she allows herself, to be always about her like a sylph without allowing her to see or to suspect me, for if she did, the future would be lost,—that is my life, my true life.—For seven years I have never gone to bed without going first to see the light of her night-lamp, or her shadow on the window curtains.

"'She left my house, choosing to take nothing but the dress she wore that day. The child carried her magnanimity to the point of folly! Consequently, eighteen months after her flight she was deserted by her lover, who was appalled by the cold, cruel, sinister, and revolting aspect of poverty—the coward! The man had, no doubt, counted on the easy and luxurious life in Switzerland or Italy which fine ladies indulge in when they leave their husbands. Honorine has sixty thousand francs a year of her own. The wretch left the dear creature expecting an infant, and without a penny. In the month of November 1820 I found means to persuade the best *accoucheur* in Paris to play the part of a humble suburban apothecary. I induced the priest of the parish in which the Countess was living to supply her needs as though he were performing an act of charity. Then to hide my wife, to secure her against discovery, to find her a housekeeper who would be devoted to me and be my intelligent confidante—it was a task worthy of Figaro! You may suppose that to discover where my wife had taken refuge I had only to make up my mind to it.

"'After three months of desperation rather than despair, the idea of devoting myself to Honorine with God only in my secret, was one of those poems which occur only to the heart of a lover through life and death! Love must have its daily food. And ought I not to protect this child, whose guilt was the outcome of my imprudence, against fresh disaster—to fulfill my part, in short, as a guardian angel?—At the age of seven months her infant died, happily for her

and for me. For nine months more my wife lay between life and death, deserted at the time when she most needed a manly arm; but this arm,' said he, holding out his own with a gesture of angelic dignity, 'was extended over her head. Honorine was nursed as she would have been in her own home. When, on her recovery, she asked how and by whom she had been assisted, she was told—"By the Sisters of Charity in the neighborhood—by the Maternity Society—by the parish priest, who took an interest in her."

" 'This woman, whose pride amounts to a vice, has shown a power of resistance in misfortune, which on some evenings I call the obstinacy of a mule. Honorine was bent on earning her living. My wife works! For five years past I have lodged her in the Rue Saint-Maur, in a charming little house, where she makes artificial flowers and articles of fashion. She believes that she sells the product of her elegant fancy-work to a shop, where she is so well paid that she makes twenty francs a day, and in these six years she has never had a moment's suspicion. She pays for everything she needs at about the third of its value, so that on six thousand francs a year she lives as if she had fifteen thousand. She is devoted to flowers, and pays a hundred crowns to a gardener, who costs me twelve hundred in wages, and sends me in a bill for two thousand francs every three months. I have promised the man a market-garden with a house on it close to the porter's lodge in the Rue Saint-Maur. I hold this ground in the name of a clerk of the law courts. The smallest indiscretion would ruin the gardener's prospects. Honorine has her little house, a garden, and a splendid hothouse, for a rent of five hundred francs a year. There she lives under the name of her housekeeper, Madame Gobain, the old woman of impeccable discretion whom I was so lucky as to find, and whose affection Honorine has won. But her zeal, like that of the gardener, is kept hot by the promise of reward at the moment of success. The porter and his wife cost me dreadfully dear for the same reasons. However, for three years Honorine has been happy, believing that she owes to her own toil all the luxury of flowers, dress, and comfort.

" 'Oh! I know what you are about to say,' cried the Count, seeing a question in my eyes and on my lips. 'Yes, yes; I have made the attempt. My wife was formerly living in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. One day when, from what Gobain told me, I believed in some chance of a reconciliation, I wrote by post a letter, in which I tried to propitiate my wife—a letter written and rewritten twenty times! I will not describe my agonies. I went from the Rue Payenne to the Rue de Reuilly like a condemned wretch going from the Palais de Justice to his execution, but he goes on a cart, and I was on foot. It was dark—there was a fog; I went to meet Madame Gobain, who was to come and tell me what my wife had done. Honorine, on recognizing my writing, had thrown the letter into the fire without reading it.—"Madame Gobain," she had exclaimed, "I leave this to-morrow."

" 'What a dagger-stroke was this to a man who found inexhaustible pleasure in the trickery by which he gets the finest Lyons velvet at twelve francs a

yard, a pheasant, a fish, a dish of fruit, for a tenth of their value, for a woman so ignorant as to believe that she is paying ample wages with two hundred and fifty francs to Madame Gobain, a cook fit for a bishop.

"'You have sometimes found me rubbing my hands in the enjoyment of a sort of happiness. Well, I had just succeeded in some ruse worthy of the stage. I had just deceived my wife—I had sent her by a purchaser of wardrobes an Indian shawl, to be offered to her as the property of an actress who had hardly worn it, but in which I—the solemn lawyer whom you know—had wrapped myself for a night! In short, my life at this day may be summed up in the two words which express the extremes of torment—I love, and I wait! I have in Madame Gobain a faithful spy on the heart I worship. I go every evening to chat with the old woman, to hear from her all that Honorine has done during the day, the lightest word she has spoken, for a single exclamation might betray to me the secrets of that soul which is willfully deaf and dumb. Honorine is pious; she attends the Church services and prays, but she has never been to confession or taken the Communion; she foresees what a priest would tell her. She will not listen to the advice, to the injunction, that she should return to me. This horror of me overwhelms me, dismays me, for I have never done her the smallest harm. I have always been kind to her. Granting even that I may have been a little hasty when teaching her, that my man's irony may have hurt her legitimate girlish pride, is that a reason for persisting in a determination which only the most implacable hatred could have inspired? Honorine has never told Madame Gobain who she is; she keeps absolute silence as to her marriage, so that the worthy and respectable woman can never speak a word in my favor, for she is the only person in the house who knows my secret. The others know nothing; they live under the awe caused by the name of the Prefect of Police, and their respect for the power of a Minister. Hence it is impossible for me to penetrate that heart; the citadel is mine, but I cannot get into it. I have not a single means of action. An act of violence would ruin me forever.

"'How can I argue against reasons of which I know nothing? Should I write a letter, and have it copied by a public writer, and laid before Honorine? But that would be to run the risk of a third removal. The last cost me fifty thousand francs. The purchase was made in the first instance in the name of the secretary whom you succeeded. The unhappy man, who did not know how lightly I sleep, was detected by me in the act of opening the box in which I had put the private agreement; I coughed, and he was seized with a panic; next day I compelled him to sell the house to the man in whose name it now stands, and I turned him out.

"'If it were not that I feel all my noblest faculties as a man satisfied, happy, expansive; if the part I am playing were not that of divine fatherhood; if I did not drink in delight by every pore, there are moments when I should believe that I was a monomaniac. Sometimes at night I hear the jingling bells of madness. I dread the violent transitions from a feeble hope, which

sometimes shines and flashes up, to complete despair, falling as low as man can fall. A few days since I was seriously considering the horrible end of the story of Lovelace and Clarissa Harlowe, and saying to myself, If Honorine were the mother of a child of mine, must she not necessarily return under her husband's roof?

"'And I have such complete faith in a happy future, that ten months ago I bought and paid for one of the handsomest houses in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. If I win back Honorine, I will not allow her to see this house again, nor the room from which she fled. I mean to place my idol in a new temple, where she may feel that life is altogether new. That house is being made a marvel of elegance and taste. I have been told of a poet who, being almost mad with love for an actress, bought the handsomest bed in Paris without knowing how the actress would reward his passion. Well, one of the coldest of lawyers, a man who is supposed to be the gravest adviser of the Crown, was stirred to the depths of his heart by that anecdote. The orator of the Legislative Chamber can understand the poet who fed his ideal on material possibilities. Three days before the arrival of Maria Louisa, Napoleon flung himself on his wedding bed at Compiègne. All stupendous passions have the same impulses. I love as a poet—as an emperor!'

"As I heard the last words, I believed that Comte Octave's fears were realized; he had risen, and was walking up and down, and gesticulating, but he stopped as if shocked by the vehemence of his own words.

"'I am very ridiculous,' he added, after a long pause, looking at me, as if craving a glance of pity.

"'No, Monsieur, you are very unhappy.'

"'Ah, yes!' said he, taking up the thread of his confidences. 'From the violence of my speech you may, you must believe in the intensity of a physical passion which for nine years has absorbed all my faculties; but that is nothing in comparison with the worship I feel for the soul, the mind, the heart, all in that woman that is not mere woman; the enchanting divinities in the train of Love, with whom we pass our life, and who form the daily poem of a fugitive delight. By a phenomenon of retrospection I see now the graces of Honorine's mind and heart, to which I paid little heed in the time of my happiness—like all who are happy. From day to day I have appreciated the extent of my loss, discovering the exquisite gifts of that capricious and refractory young creature who has grown so strong and so proud under the heavy hand of poverty and the shock of the most cowardly desertion. And that heavenly blossom is fading in solitude and hiding!—Ah! The law of which we were speaking,' he went on with bitter irony, 'the law is a squad of gendarmes—my wife seized and dragged away by force! Would not that be to triumph over a corpse? Religion has no hold on her; she craves its poetry, she prays, but she does not listen to the commandments of the Church. I, for my part, have exhausted everything in the way of mercy, of kindness, of love; I am at my wit's end. Only one chance of victory is left to me: the cunning and patience with which bird-catchers at last entrap the

wariest birds, the swiftest, the most capricious, and the rarest. Hence, Maurice, when M. de Grandville's indiscretion betrayed to you the secret of my life, I ended by regarding this incident as one of the decrees of fate, one of the utterances for which gamblers listen and pray in the midst of their most impassioned play. . . . Have you enough affection for me to show me romantic devotion?'

"'I see what you are coming to, Monsieur le Comte,' said I, interrupting him; 'I guess your purpose. Your first secretary tried to open your deed box. I know the heart of your second—he might fall in love with your wife. And can you devote him to destruction by sending him into the fire? Can anyone put his hand into a brazier without burning it?'

"'You are a foolish boy,' replied the Count. 'I will send you well gloved. It is no secretary of mine that will be lodged in the Rue Saint-Maur in the little garden-house which I have at his disposal. It is my distant cousin, Baron de L'Hostal, a lawyer high in office . . .'

"After a moment of silent surprise, I heard the gate bell ring, and a carriage came into the courtyard. Presently the footman announced Madame de Courteville and her daughter. The Count had a large family connection on his mother's side. Madame de Courteville, his cousin, was the widow of a judge on the bench of the Seine division, who had left her a daughter and no fortune whatever. What could a woman of nine-and-twenty be in comparison with a young girl of twenty, as lovely as imagination could wish for an ideal mistress?

"'Baron, and Master of Appeals, till you get something better, and this old house settled on her,—would not you have enough good reasons for not falling in love with the Countess?' he said to me in a whisper, as he took me by the hand and introduced me to Madame de Courteville and her daughter.

"I was dazzled, not so much by these advantages of which I had never dreamed, but by Amélie de Courteville, whose beauty was thrown into relief by one of those well-chosen toilets which a mother can achieve for a daughter when she wants to see her married."

"But I will not talk of myself," said the Consul after a pause.

"Three weeks later I went to live in the gardener's cottage, which had been cleaned, repaired, and furnished with the celerity which is explained by three words: Paris; French workmen; money! I was as much in love as the Count could possibly desire as a security. Would the prudence of a young man of five-and-twenty be equal to the part I was undertaking, involving a friend's happiness? To settle that matter, I may confess that I counted very much on my uncle's advice; for I had been authorized by the Count to take him into confidence in any case where I deemed his interference necessary. I engaged a garden; I devoted myself to horticulture; I worked frantically, like a man whom nothing can divert, turning up the soil of the market-garden, and appropriating the ground to the culture of flowers. Like the maniacs of England, or of Holland, I gave it out that I was devoted to one kind of flower, and especially grew dahlias, collecting every variety. You will understand that my conduct, even in the smallest details, was

laid down for me by the Count, whose whole intellectual powers were directed to the most trifling incidents of the tragi-comedy enacted in the Rue Saint-Maur. As soon as the Countess had gone to bed, at about eleven at night, Octave, Madame Gobain, and I sat in council. I heard the old woman's report to the Count of his wife's least proceedings during the day. He inquired into everything: her meals, her occupations, her frame of mind, her plans for the morrow, the flowers she proposed to imitate. I understood what love in despair may be when it is the threefold passion of the heart, the mind, and the senses. Octave lived only for that hour.

"During two months, while my work in the garden lasted, I never set eyes on the little house where my fair neighbor dwelt. I had not even inquired whether I had a neighbor, though the Countess's garden was divided from mine by a paling, along which she had planted cypress trees already four feet high. One fine morning Madame Gobain announced to her mistress, as a disastrous piece of news, the intention, expressed by an eccentric creature who had become her neighbor, of building a wall between the two gardens, at the end of the year. I will say nothing of the curiosity which consumed me to see the Countess. The wish almost extinguished by budding love for Amélie de Courteville. My scheme for building a wall was indeed a serious threat. There would be no more fresh air for Honorine, whose garden would then be a sort of narrow alley shut in between my wall and her own little house. This dwelling, formerly a summer villa, was like a house of cards; it was not more than thirty feet deep, and about a hundred feet long. The garden front, painted in the German fashion, imitated a trellis with flowers up to the second floor, and was a really charming example of the Pompadour style, so well called rococo. A long avenue of limes led up to it. The gardens of the pavilion and my plot of ground were in the shape of a hatchet, of which this avenue was the handle. My wall would cut away three-quarters of the hatchet.

"The Countess was in despair.

"'My good Gobain,' said she, 'what sort of man is this florist?'

"'On my word,' said the housekeeper, 'I do not know whether it will be possible to tame him. He seems to have a horror of women. He is the nephew of a Paris curé. I have seen the uncle but once; a fine old man of sixty, very ugly, but very amiable. It is quite possible that this priest encourages his nephew, as they say in the neighborhood, in his love of flowers, that nothing worse may happen——'

"'Why—what?'

"'Well, your neighbor is a little cracked!' said Gobain, tapping her head!

"'Now a harmless lunatic is the only man whom no woman ever distrusts in the matter of sentiment. You will see how wise the Count had been in choosing this disguise for me.

"'What ails him then?' asked the Countess.

"'He has studied too hard,' replied Gobain; 'he has turned misanthropic. And he has his reasons for disliking women—well, if you want to know all that is said about him——'

"'Well, said Honorine, 'madmen frighten me less than sane folks; I will speak

to him myself! Tell him that I beg him to come here. If I do not succeed, I will send for the curé.'

"The day after this conversation, as I was walking along my graveled path, I caught sight of the half-opened curtains on the first floor of the little house, and of a woman's face curiously peeping out. Madame Gobain called me. I hastily glanced at the Countess's house, and by a rude shrug expressed, 'What do I care for your mistress!'

"'Madame,' said Gobain, called upon to give an account of her errand, 'the madman bid me leave him in peace, saying that even a charcoal seller is master of his own premises, especially when he has no wife.'

"'He is perfectly right,' said the Countess.

"'Yes, but he ended by saying, "I will go," when I told him that he would greatly distress a lady living in retirement, who found her greatest solace in growing flowers.'

"Next day a signal from Gobain informed me that I was expected. After the Countess's breakfast, when she was walking to and fro in front of her house, I broke out some palings, and went towards her. I had dressed myself like a countryman, in an old pair of gray flannel trousers, heavy wooden shoes, and shabby shooting coat, a peaked cap on my head, a ragged bandanna round my neck, hands soiled with mold, and a dibble in my hand.

"'Madame,' said the housekeeper, 'this good man is your neighbor.'

"The Countess was not alarmed. I saw at last the woman whom her own conduct and her husband's confidences had made me so curious to meet. It was in the early days of May. The air was pure, the weather serene; the verdure of the first foliage, the fragrance of spring formed a setting for this creature of sorrow. As I then saw Honorine I understood Octave's passion and the truthfulness of his description, 'A heavenly flower!'

"Her pallor was what first struck me by its peculiar tone of white—for there are as many tones of white as of red or blue. On looking at the Countess, the eye seemed to feel that tender skin, where the blood flowed in the blue veins. At the slightest emotion the blood mounted under the surface in rosy flushes like a cloud. When we met, the sunshine, filtering through the light foliage of the acacias, shed on Honorine the pale gold, ambient glory in which Raphael and Titian, alone of all painters, have been able to enwrap the Virgin. Her brown eyes expressed both tenderness and vivacity; their brightness seemed reflected in her face through the long downcast lashes. Merely by lifting her delicate eyelids, Honorine could cast a spell; there was so much feeling, dignity, terror, or contempt in her way of raising or dropping those veils of the soul. She could freeze or give life by a look. Her light-brown hair, carelessly knotted on her head, outlined a poet's brow, high, powerful, and dreamy. The mouth was wholly voluptuous. And to crown all by a grace, rare in France, though common in Italy, all the lines and forms of the head had a stamp of nobleness which would defy the outrages of time.

"Though slight, Honorine was not thin, and her figure struck me as being one that might revive love when it

believed itself exhausted. She perfectly represented the idea conveyed by the word *mignonne,* for she was one of those pliant little women who allow themselves to be taken up, petted, set down, and taken up again like a kitten. Her small feet, as I heard them on the gravel, made a light sound essentially their own, that harmonized with the rustle of her dress, producing a feminine music which stamped itself on the heart, and remained distinct from the footfall of a thousand other women. Her gait bore all the quarterings of her race with so much pride, that, in the street, the least respectful working man would have made way for her. Gay and tender, haughty and imposing, it was impossible to understand her, excepting as gifted with these apparently incompatible qualities, which, nevertheless, had left her still a child. But it was a child who might be as strong as an angel; and, like the angel, once hurt in her nature, she would be implacable.

"Coldness on that face must no doubt be death to those on whom her eyes had smiled, for whom her set lips had parted, for those whose soul had drunk in the melody of that voice, lending to her words the poetry of song by its peculiar intonation. Inhaling the perfume of violets that accompanied her, I understood how the memory of this wife had arrested the Count on the threshold of debauchery, and how impossible it would be ever to forget a creature who really was a flower to the touch, a flower to the eye, a flower of fragrance, a heavenly flower to the soul. . . . Honorine inspired devotion, chivalrous devotion, regardless of reward. A man on seeing her must say to himself—

"'Think, and I will divine your thought; speak, and I will obey. If my life, sacrificed in torments, can procure you one day's happiness, take my life! I will smile like a martyr at the stake, for I shall offer that day to God, as a token to which a father responds on recognizing a gift to his child.' Many women study their expression, and succeed in producing effects similar to those which would have struck you at first sight of the Countess; only, in her, it all was the outcome of a delightful nature, that inimitable nature went at once to the heart. If I tell you all this, it is because her soul, her thoughts, the exquisiteness of her heart, are all we are concerned with, and you would have blamed me if I had not sketched them for you.

"I was very near forgetting my part as a half-crazy lout, clumsy, and by no means chivalrous.

"'I am told, Madame, that you are fond of flowers?'

"'I am an artificial flower-maker,' said she. 'After growing flowers, I imitate them, like a mother who is artist enough to have the pleasure of painting portraits of her children. . . . That is enough to tell you that I am poor and unable to pay for the concession I am anxious to obtain from you?'

"'But how,' said I, as grave as a judge, 'can a lady of such rank as yours would seem to be, ply so humble a calling? Have you, like me, good reasons for employing your fingers so as to keep your brains from working?'

"'Let us stick to the question of the wall,' said she with a smile.

"'Why, we have begun at the foundations,' said I. 'Must not I know which of us ought to yield to the other in

behalf of our suffering, or, if you choose, of our mania?—Oh! what a charming clump of narcissus! They are as fresh as this spring morning!'

"I assure you, she had made for herself a perfect museum of flowers and shrubs, which none might see but the sun, and of which the arrangement had been prompted by the genius of an artist; the most heartless of landlords must have treated it with respect. The masses of plants, arranged according to their height, or in single clumps, were really a joy to the soul. This retired and solitary garden breathed comforting scents, and suggested none but sweet thoughts and graceful, nay, voluptuous pictures. On it was set that inscrutable sign-manual, which our true character stamps on everything, as soon as nothing compels us to obey the various hypocrisies, necessary as they are, which Society insists on. I looked alternately at the mass of narcissus and at the Countess, affecting to be far more in love with the flowers than with her, to carry out my part.

"'So you are very fond of flowers?' said she.

"'They are,' I replied, 'the only beings that never disappoint our cares and affection.' And I went on to deliver such a diatribe while comparing botany and the world, that we ended miles away from the dividing wall, and the Countess must have supposed me to be a wretched and wounded sufferer worthy of her pity. However, at the end of half an hour my neighbor naturally brought me back to the point; for women, when they are not in love, have all the cold blood of an experienced attorney.

"'If you insist on my leaving the paling,' said I, 'you will learn all the secrets of gardening that I want to hide; I am seeking to grow a blue dahlia, a blue rose; I am crazy for blue flowers. Is not blue the favorite color of superior souls? We are neither of us really at home; we might as well make a little door of open railings to unite our gardens. . . . You, too, are fond of flowers; you will see mine, I shall see yours. If you receive no visitors at all, I, for my part, have none but my uncle, the Curé of the White Friars.'

"'No,' said she, 'I will give you the right to come into my garden, my premises, at any hour. Come and welcome; you will always be admitted as a neighbor with whom I hope to keep on good terms. But I like my solitude too well to burden it with any loss of independence.'

"'As you please,' said I, and with one leap I was over the paling.

"'Now, of what use would a door be?' said I, from my own domain, turning round to the Countess, and mocking her with a madman's gesture and grimace.

"For a fortnight I seemed to take no heed of my neighbor. Towards the end of May, one lovely evening, we happened both to be out on opposite sides of the paling, both walking slowly. Having reached the end, we could not help exchanging a few civil words; she found me in such deep dejection, lost in such painful meditations, that she spoke to me of hopefulness, in brief sentences that sounded like the songs with which nurses lull their babies. I then leaped the fence, and found myself for the second time at her side. The Countess

led me into the house, wishing to subdue my sadness. So at last I had penetrated the sanctuary where everything was in harmony with the woman I have tried to describe to you.

"Exquisite simplicity reigned there. The interior of the little house was just such a dainty box as the art of the eighteenth century devised for the pretty profligacy of a fine gentleman. The dining-room, on the ground floor, was painted in fresco, with garlands of flowers, admirably and marvelously executed. The staircase was charmingly decorated in monochrome. The little drawing-room, opposite the dining-room, was very much faded; but the Countess had hung it with panels of tapestry of fanciful designs, taken off old screens. A bathroom came next. Upstairs there was but one bedroom, with a dressing-room, and a library which she used as her workroom. The kitchen was beneath in the basement on which the house was raised, for there was a flight of several steps outside. The balustrade of a balcony in garlands *à la* Pompadour concealed the roof; only the lead cornices were visible. In this retreat one was a hundred leagues from Paris.

"But for the bitter smile which occasionally played on the beautiful red lips of this pale woman, it would have been possible to believe that this violet buried in her thicket of flowers was happy. In a few days we had reached a certain degree of intimacy, the result of our close neighborhood and of the Countess's conviction that I was indifferent to women. A look would have spoilt all, and I never allowed a thought of her to be seen in my eyes. Honorine chose to regard me as an old friend. Her manner to me was the outcome of a kind of pity. Her looks, her voice, her words, all showed that she was a hundred miles away from the coquettish airs which the strictest virtue might have allowed under such circumstances. She soon gave me the right to go into the pretty workshop where she made her flowers, a retreat full of books and curiosities, as smart as a boudoir where elegance emphasized the vulgarity of the tools of her trade. The Countess had in the course of time poetized, as I may say, a thing which is at the antipodes to poetry—a manufacture.

"Perhaps of all the work a woman can do, the making of artificial flowers is that of which the details allow her to display most grace. For coloring prints she must sit bent over a table and devote herself, with some attention, to this half painting. Embroidering tapestry, as diligently as a woman must who is to earn her living by it, entails consumption or curvature of the spine. Engraving music is one of the most laborious, by the care, the minute exactitude, and the intelligence it demands. Sewing and white embroidery do not earn thirty sous a day. But the making of flowers and light articles of wear necessitates a variety of movements, gestures, ideas even, which do not take a pretty woman out of her sphere; she is still herself; she may chat, laugh, sing, or think.

"There was certainly a feeling for art in the way in which the Countess arranged on a long deal table the myriad-colored petals which were used in composing the flowers she was to produce. The saucers of color were of white china, and always clean, arranged in such order that the eye could at once

see the required shade in the scale of tints. Thus the aristocratic artist saved time. A pretty little cabinet with a hundred tiny drawers, of ebony inlaid with ivory, contained the little steel molds in which she shaped the leaves and some forms of petals. A fine Japanese bowl held the paste, which was never allowed to turn sour, and it had a fitted cover with a hinge so easy that she could lift it with a finger-tip. The wire, of iron or brass, lurked in a little drawer of the table before her.

"Under her eyes, in a Venetian glass, shaped like a flower-cup on its stem, was the living model she strove to imitate. She had a passion for achievement; she attempted the most difficult things, close racemes, the tiniest corollas, heaths, nectaries of the most variegated hues. Her hands, as swift as her thoughts, went from the table to the flower she was making, as those of an accomplished pianist fly over the keys. Her fingers seemed to be fairies, to use Perrault's expression, so infinite were the different actions of twisting, fitting, and pressure needed for the work, all hidden under grace of movement, while she adapted each motion to the result with the lucidity of an instinct.

"I could not tire of admiring her as she shaped a flower from the materials sorted before her, padding the wire stem and adjusting the leaves. She displayed the genius of a painter in her bold attempts; she copied faded flowers and yellowing leaves; she struggled even with wildflowers, the most artless of all, and the most elaborate in their simplicity.

"'This art,' she would say, 'is in its infancy. If the women of Paris had a little of the genius which the slavery of the harem brings out in Oriental women, they would lend a complete language of flowers to the wreaths they wear on their heads. To please my own taste as an artist I have made drooping flowers with leaves of the hue of Florentine bronze, such as are found before or after the winter. Would not such a crown on the head of a young woman whose life is a failure have a certain poetical fitness? How many things a woman might express by her head-dress! Are there not flowers for drunken Bacchantes, flowers for gloomy and stern bigots, pensive flowers for women who are bored? Botany, I believe, may be made to express every sensation and thought of the soul, even the most subtle?'

"She would employ me to stamp out the leaves, cut up material, and prepare wires for the stems. My affected desire for occupation made me soon skillful. We talked as we worked. When I had nothing to do, I read new books to her, for I had my part to keep up as a man weary of life, worn out with griefs, gloomy, skeptical, and soured. My person led to adorable banter as to my purely physical resemblance—with the exception of his club foot—to Lord Byron. It was tacitly acknowledged that her own troubles, as to which she kept the most profound silence, far outweighed mine, though the causes I assigned for my misanthropy might have satisfied Young or Job.

"I will say nothing of the feelings of shame which tormented me as I inflicted on my heart, like the beggars in the street, false wounds to excite the compassion of that enchanting woman

I soon appreciated the extent of my devotedness by learning to estimate the baseness of a spy. The expressions of sympathy bestowed on me would have comforted the greatest grief. This charming creature, weaned from the world, and for so many years alone, having, besides love, treasures of kindliness to bestow, offered these to me with childlike effusiveness and such compassion as would inevitably have filled with bitterness any profligate who should have fallen in love with her; for, alas, it was all charity, all sheer pity. Her renunciation of love, her dread of what is called happiness for women, she proclaimed with equal vehemence and candor. These happy days proved to me that a woman's friendship is far superior to her love.

"I suffered the revelations of my sorrows to be dragged from me with as many grimaces as a young lady allows herself before sitting down to the piano, so conscious are they of the annoyance that will follow. As you may imagine, the necessity for overcoming my dislike to speak had induced the Countess to strengthen the bonds of our intimacy; but she found in me so exact a counterpart of her own antipathy to love, that I fancied she was well content with the chance which had brought to her desert island a sort of Man Friday. Solitude was perhaps beginning to weigh on her. At the same time, there was nothing of the coquette in her; nothing survived of the woman; she did not feel that she had a heart, she told me, excepting in the ideal world where she found refuge. I involuntarily compared these two lives—hers and the Count's:—his, all activity, agitation, and emotion; hers, all inaction, quiescence, and stagnation. The woman and the man were admirably obedient to their nature. My misanthropy allowed me to utter cynical sallies against men and women both, and I indulged in them, hoping to bring Honorine to the confidential point; but she was not to be caught in any trap, and I began to understand that mulish obstinacy which is commoner among women than is generally supposed.

"'The Orientals are right,' I said to her one evening, 'when they shut you up and regard you merely as the playthings of their pleasure. Europe has been well punished for having admitted you to form an element of society and for accepting you on an equal footing. In my opinion, woman is the most dishonorable and cowardly being to be found. Nay, and that is where her charm lies. Where would be the pleasure of hunting a tame thing? When once a woman has inspired a man's passion, she is to him forever sacred; in his eyes she is hedged round by an imprescriptible prerogative. In men gratitude for past delights is eternal. Though he should find his mistress grown old or unworthy, the woman still has rights over his heart; but to you women the man you have loved is as nothing to you; nay, more, he is unpardonable in one thing—he lives on! You dare not own it, but you all have in your hearts the feeling which that popular calumny called tradition ascribes to the Lady of the Tour de Nesle: "What a pity it is that we cannot live on love as we live on fruit, and that when we have had our fill, nothing should survive but the remembrance of pleasure!"'

"'God has, no doubt, reserved such perfect bliss for Paradise,' said she. 'But,' she added, 'if your argument seems to you very witty, to me it has the disadvantage of being false. What can those women be who give themselves up to a succession of loves?' she asked, looking at me as the Virgin in Ingres' picture looks at Louis XIII. offering her his kingdom.

"'You are an actress in good faith,' said I, 'for you gave me a look just now which would make the fame of an actress. Still, lovely as you are, you have loved; *ergo,* you forget.'

"'I!' she exclaimed, evading my question, 'I am not a woman. I am a nun, and seventy-two years old!'

"'Then, how can you so positively assert that you feel more keenly than I? Sorrow has but one form for women. The only misfortunes they regard are disappointments of the heart.'

"She looked at me sweetly, and, like all women when stuck between the issues of a dilemma, or held in the clutches of truth, she persisted, nevertheless, in her willfulness.'

"'I am a nun,' she said, 'and you talk to me of a world where I shall never again set foot.'

"'Not even in thought?' said I.

"'Is the world so much to be desired?' she replied. 'Oh! when my mind wanders, it goes higher. The angel of perfection, the beautiful angel Gabriel, often sings in my heart. If I were rich, I should work, all the same, to keep me from soaring too often on the many-tinted wings of the angel, and wandering in the world of fancy. There are meditations which are the ruin of us women! I owe much peace of mind to my flowers, though sometimes they fail to occupy me. On some days I find my soul invaded by a purposeless expectancy; I cannot banish some idea which takes possession of me, which seems to make my fingers clumsy. I feel that some great event is impending, that my life is about to change; I listen vaguely, I stare into the darkness, I have no liking for my work, and after a thousand fatigues I find life once more—everyday life. Is this a warning from heaven? I ask myself——'

"After three months of this struggle between two diplomats, concealed under the semblance of youthful melancholy, and a woman whose disgust of life made her invulnerable, I told the Count that it was impossible to drag this tortoise out of her shell; it must be broken. The evening before, in our last quite friendly discussion, the Countess had exclaimed—

"'Lucretia's dagger wrote in letters of blood the watchword of woman's charter: *Liberty!*'

"From that moment the Count left me free to act.

"'I have been paid a hundred francs for the flowers and caps I made this week!' Honorine exclaimed gleefully one Saturday evening when I went to visit her in the little sitting-room on the ground floor, which the unavowed proprietor had had regilt.

"It was ten o'clock. The twilight of July and a glorious moon lent us their misty light. Gusts of mingled perfumes soothed the soul; the Countess was clinking in her hand the five gold pieces given to her by a supposititious dealer in fashionable frippery, another of Oc-

tave's accomplices found for him by a judge, M. Popinot.

"'I earn my living by amusing myself,' said she; 'I am free, when men, armed with their laws, have tried to make us slaves. Oh, I have transports of pride every Saturday! In short, I like M. Gaudissart's gold pieces as much as Lord Byron, your double, liked Mr. Murray's.'

"'This is not becoming in a woman,' said I.

"'Pooh! Am I a woman? I am a boy gifted with a soft soul, that is all; a boy whom no woman can torture——'

"'Your life is the negation of your whole being,' I replied. 'What? You, on whom God has lavished His choicest treasures of love and beauty, do you never wish——?'

"'For what?' said she, somewhat disturbed by a speech which, for the first time, gave the lie to the part I had assumed.

"'For a pretty little child with curling hair, running, playing among the flowers, like a flower itself of life and love, calling you mother!'

"I waited for an answer. A too prolonged silence led me to perceive the terrible effect of my words, though the darkness at first concealed it. Leaning on her sofa, the Countess had not indeed fainted, but frozen under a nervous attack of which the first chill, as gentle as everything that was part of her, felt, as she afterwards said, like the influence of a most insidious poison. I called Madame Gobain, who came and led away her mistress, laid her on her bed, unlaced her, undressed her, and restored her, not to life, it is true, but to the consciousness of some dreadful suffering. I meanwhile walked up and down the path behind the house, weeping, and doubting my success. I only wished to give up this part of the bird-catcher which I had so rashly assumed. Madame Gobain, who came down and found me with my face wet with tears, hastily went up again to say to the Countess—

"'What has happened, madame? Monsieur Maurice is crying like a child.'

"Roused to action by the evil interpretation that might be put on our mutual behavior, she summoned superhuman strength to put on a wrapper and come down to me.

"'You are not the cause of this attack,' said she. 'I am subject to these spasms, a sort of cramp of the heart——'

"'And you will not tell me of your troubles?' said I, in a voice which cannot be affected, as I wiped away my tears. 'Have you not just now told me that you have been a mother, and have been so unhappy as to lose your child?'

"'Marie!' she called as she rang the bell. Gobain came in.

"'Bring lights and some tea,' she said, with the calm decision of a My-lady clothed in the armor of pride by the dreadful English training which you know too well.

"When the housekeeper had lighted the tapers and closed the shutters, the Countess showed me a mute countenance; her indomitable pride and gravity, worthy of a savage, had already reasserted their mastery. She said——

"'Do you know why I like Lord Byron so much? It is because he suffered as animals do. Of what use are complaints when they are not an elegy like Manfred's, nor bitter mockery

like Don Juan's, nor a reverie like Childe Harold's? Nothing shall be known of me. My heart is a poem that I lay before God.'

"'If I chose——' said I.

"'If?' she repeated.

"'I have no interest in anything,' I replied, 'so I cannot be inquisitive; but, if I chose, I could know all your secrets by to-morrow.'

"'I defy you!' she exclaimed, with ill-disguised uneasiness.

"'Seriously?'

"'Certainly,' said she, tossing her head. 'If such a crime is possible, I ought to know it.'

"'In the first place, madame,' I went on, pointing to her hands, 'those pretty fingers, which are enough to show that you are not a mere girl—were they made for toil? Then you call yourself Madame Gobain, you, who, in my presence the other day on receiving a letter, said to Marie: "Here, this is for you?" Marie is the real Madame Gobain; so you conceal your name behind that of your housekeeper.—Fear nothing, madame, from me. You have in me the most devoted friend you will ever have: Friend, do you understand me? I give this word its sacred and pathetic meaning, so profaned in France, where we apply it to our enemies. And your friend, who will defend you against everything, only wishes that you should be as happy as such a woman ought to be. Who can tell whether the pain I have involuntarily caused you was not a voluntary act?'

"'Yes,' replied she with threatening audacity, 'I insist on it. Be curious, and tell me all that you can find out about me; but,' and she held up her finger, 'you must also tell me by what means you obtain your information. The preservation of the small happiness I enjoy here depends on the steps you take.'

"'That means that you will fly——'

"'On wings!' she cried, 'to the New World——'

"'Where you will be at the mercy of the brutal passions you will inspire,' said I, interrupting her. 'Is it not the very essence of genius and beauty to shine, to attract men's gaze, to excite desires and evil thoughts? Paris is a desert with Bedouins; Paris is the only place in the world where those who must work for their livelihood can hide their life. What have you to complain of? Who am I? An additional servant—M. Gobain, that is all. If you have to fight a duel, you may need a second.'

"'Never mind; find out who I am. I have already said that I insist. Now, I beg that you will,' she went on, with the grace which you ladies have at command," said the Consul, looking at the ladies.

"'Well, then, to-morrow, at the same hour, I will tell you what I may have discovered,' replied I. 'But do not therefore hate me! Will you behave like other women?'

"'What do other women do?

"'They lay upon us immense sacrifices, and when we have made them, they reproach us for it some time later as if it were an injury.'

"'They are right if the thing required appears to be a sacrifice!' replied she pointedly.

"'Instead of sacrifices, say efforts and——'

"'It would be an impertinence,' said she.

"'Forgive me,' said I. 'I forgot that woman and the Pope are infallible.'

"'Good heavens!' said she after a long pause, 'only two words would be enough to destroy the peace so dearly bought, and which I enjoy like a fraud——'

"She rose and paid no further heed to me.

"'Where can I go?' she said. 'What is to become of me?—Must I leave this quiet retreat that I had arranged with such care to end my days in?'

"'To end your days!' exclaimed I with visible alarm. 'Has it never struck you that a time would come when you could no longer work, when competition will lower the price of flowers and articles of fashion——?'

"'I have already saved a thousand crowns,' she said.

"'Heavens! what privations such a sum must represent!' I exclaimed.

"'Leave me,' said she, 'till to-morrow. This evening I am not myself; I must be alone. Must I not save my strength in case of disaster? For, if you should learn anything, others besides you would be informed, and then—Good-night,' she added shortly, dismissing me with an imperious gesture.

"'The battle is to-morrow, then,' I replied with a smile, to keep up the appearance of indifference I had given to the scene. But as I went down the avenue I repeated the words—

"'The battle is to-morrow.'

"Octave's anxiety was equal to Honorine's. The Count and I remained together till two in the morning, walking to and fro by the trenches of the Bastille, like two generals who, on the eve of a battle, calculate all the chances, examine the ground, and perceive that the victory must depend on an opportunity to be seized half-way through the fight. These two divided beings would each lie awake, one in the hope, the other in agonizing dread of reunion. The real dramas of life are not in circumstances, but in feelings; they are played in the heart, or, if you please, in that vast realm which we ought to call the Spiritual World. Octave and Honorine moved and lived altogether in the world of lofty spirits.

"I was punctual. At ten next evening I was, for the first time, shown into a charming bedroom furnished with white and blue—the nest of this wounded dove. The Countess looked at me, and was about to speak, but was stricken dumb by my respectful demeanor.

"'Madame la Comtesse," said I with a grave smile.

"The poor woman, who had risen, dropped back into her chair and remained there, sunk in an attitude of grief which I should have liked to see perpetuated by a great painter.

"'You are,' I went on, 'the wife of the noblest and most highly respected of men; of a man who is acknowledged to be great, but who is far greater in his conduct to you than he is in the eyes of the world. You and he are two lofty natures.—Where do you suppose yourself to be living?' I asked her.

"'In my own house,' she replied, opening her eyes with a wide stare of astonishment.

"'In Count Octave's,' I replied. 'You have been tricked. M. Lenormand, the usher of the Court, is not the real owner; he is only a screen for your husband. The delightful seclusion you enjoy is the

Count's work, the money you earn is paid by him, and his protection extends to the most trivial details of your existence. Your husband has saved you in the eyes of the world; he has assigned plausible reasons for your disappearance; he professes to hope that you were not lost in the wreck of the *Cécile*, the ship in which you sailed for Havannah to secure the fortune to be left to you by an old aunt, who might have forgotten you; you embarked, escorted by two ladies of her family and an old man-servant. The Count says that he has sent agents to various spots, and received letters which give him great hopes. He takes as many precautions to hide you from all eyes as you take yourself. In short, he obeys you. . . .'

"'That is enough,' she said. 'I want to know but one thing more. From whom have you obtained all these details?'

"'Well, madame, my uncle got a place for a penniless youth as secretary to the Commissary of police in this part of Paris. That young man told me everything. If you leave this house this evening, however stealthily, your husband will know where you are gone, and his care will follow you everywhere.—How could a woman so clever as you are believe that shopkeepers buy flowers and caps as dear as you sell them? Ask a thousand crowns for a bouquet, and you will get it. No mother's tenderness was ever more ingenious than your husband's! I have learned from the porter of this house that the Count often comes behind the fence when all are asleep, to see the glimmer of your night-light! Your large cashmere shawl cost six thousand francs—your old-clothes-seller brings you, as second hand, things fresh from the best makers. In short, you are living here like Venus in the toils of Vulcan; but you are alone in your prison by the devices of a sublime magnanimity, sublime for seven years past, and at every hour.'

"The Countess was trembling as a trapped swallow trembles while, as you hold it in your hand, it strains its neck to look about it with wild eyes. She shook with a nervous spasm, studying me with a defiant look. Her dry eyes glittered with a light that was almost hot; still, she was a woman! The moment came when her tears forced their way, and she wept—not because she was touched, but because she was helpless; they were tears of desperation. She had believed herself independent and free; marriage weighed on her as the prison cell does on the captive.

"'I will go!' she cried through her tears. 'He forces me to it; I will go where no one certainly will come after me.'

"'What,' I said, 'you would kill yourself?—Madame, you must have some very powerful reasons for not wishing to return to Comte Octave.'

"'Certainly I have!'

"'Well, then, tell them to me; tell them to my uncle. In us you will find two devoted advisers. Though in the confessional my uncle is a priest, he never is one in a drawing-room. We will hear you; we will try to find a solution of the problems you may lay before us; and if you are the dupe or the victim of some misapprehension,

perhaps we can clear the matter up. Your soul, I believe, is pure; but if you have done wrong, your fault is fully expiated. . . . At any rate, remember that in me you have a most sincere friend. If you should wish to evade the Count's tyranny, I will find you the means; he shall never find you.'

"'Oh! there is always a convent!' said she.

"'Yes. But the Count, as Minister of State, can procure your rejection by every convent in the world. Even though he is powerful, I will save you from him—but—only when you have demonstrated to me that you cannot and ought not to return to him. Oh! do not fear that you would escape his power only to fall into mine,' I added, noticing a glance of horrible suspicion, full of exaggerated dignity. 'You shall have peace, solitude, and independence; in short, you shall be as free and as little annoyed as if you were an ugly, cross old maid. I myself would never be able to see you without your consent.'

"'And how? By what means?

"'That is my secret. I am not deceiving you, of that you may be sure. Prove to me that this is the only life you can lead, that it is preferable to that of the Comtesse Octave, rich, admired, in one of the finest houses in Paris, beloved by her husband, a happy mother . . . and I will decide in your favor.'

"'But,' said she, 'will there never be a man who understands me?'

"'No. And that is why I appeal to religion to decide between us. The Curé of the White Frairs is a saint, seventy-five years of age. My uncle is not a Grand Inquisitor, he is Saint John; but for you he will be Fénelon—the Fénelon who said to the Duc de Bourgogne: "Eat a calf on a Friday by all means, Monseigneur. But be a Christian."'

"'Nay, nay, Monsieur, the convent is my last hope and my only refuge. There is none but God who can understand me. No man, not Saint Augustine himself, the tenderest of the Fathers of the Church, could enter into the scruples of my conscience, which are to me as the circles of Dante's hell, whence there is no escape. Another than my husband, a different man, however unworthy of the offering, has had all my love. No, he has not had it, for he did not take it; I gave it him as a mother gives her child a wonderful toy, which it breaks. For me there never could be two lovers. In some natures love can never be on trial; it is, or it is not. When it comes, when it rises up, it is complete.—Well, that life of eighteen months was to me a life of eighteen years; I threw into it all the faculties of my being, which were not impoverished by their effusiveness; they were exhausted by that delusive intimacy in which I alone was genuine. For me the cup of happiness is not drained, nor empty; and nothing can refill it, for it is broken. I am out of the fray; I have no weapons left. Having thus utterly abandoned myself, what am I?—the leavings of a feast. I had but one name bestowed on me, Honorine, as I had but one heart. My husband had the young girl, a worthless lover had the woman—there is nothing left!—Then let myself be loved! that is the great idea you mean to utter to me. Oh! but I still am something,

and I rebel at the idea of being a prostitute! Yes, by the light of the conflagration I saw clearly; and I tell you—well, I could imagine surrendering to another man's love, but to Octave's—No, never.'

"Ah! you love him,' I said.

"'I esteem him, respect him, venerate him; he never has done me the smallest hurt; he is kind, he is tender; but I can never more love him. However,' she went on, 'let us talk no more of this. Discussion makes everything small. I will express my notions on this subject in writing to you, for at this moment they are suffocating me; I am feverish, my feet are standing in the ashes of my Paraclete. All that I see, these things which I believed I had earned by my labor, now remind me of everything I wish to forget. Ah! I must fly from hence as I fled from my home.'

"'Where will you go?' I asked. 'Can a woman exist unprotected? At thirty, in all the glory of your beauty, rich in powers of which you have no suspicion, full of tenderness to be bestowed, are you prepared to live in the wilderness where I could hide you?—Be quite easy. The Count, who for nine years has never allowed himself to be seen here, will never go there without your permission. You have his sublime devotion of nine years as a guarantee for your tranquillity. You may therefore discuss the future in perfect confidence with my uncle and me. My uncle has as much influence as a Minister of State. So compose yourself; do not exaggerate your misfortune. A priest whose hair has grown white in the exercise of his functions is not a boy; you will be understood by him to whom every passion has been confided for nearly fifty years now, and who weighs in his hands the ponderous hearts of kings and princes. If he is stern under his stole, in the presence of your flowers he will be as tender as they are, and as indulgent as his Divine Master.'

"I left the Countess at mignight; she was apparently calm, but depressed, and had some secret purpose which no perspicacity could guess. I found the Count a few paces off, in the Rue Saint-Maur. Drawn by an irresistible attraction, he had quitted the spot on the Boulevards where we had agreed to meet.

"'What a night my poor child will go through!' he exclaimed, when I had finished my account of the scene that had just taken place. 'Supposing I were to go to her!' he added; 'supposing she were to see me suddenly?'

"'At this moment she is capable of throwing herself out of the window,' I replied. 'The Countess is one of those Lucretias who could not survive any violence, even if it were done by a man into whose arms she could throw herself.'

"'You are young,' he answered; 'you do not know that in a soul tossed by such dreadful alternatives the will is like waters of a lake lashed by a tempest; the wind changes every instant, and the waves are driven now to one shore, now to the other. During this night the chances are quite as great that on seeing me Honorine might rush into my arms as that she should throw herself out of the window.'

"'And you would accept the equal chances,' said I.

"'Well, come,' said he, 'I have at

home, to enable me to wait till to-morrow, a dose of opium which Desplein prepared for me to send me to sleep without any risk!'

"Next day at noon Gobain brought me a letter, telling me that the Countess had gone to bed at six, worn out with fatigue, and that, having taken a soothing draught prepared by the chemist, she had now fallen asleep.

"This is her letter, of which I kept a copy—for you, mademoiselle," said the Consul, addressing Camille, "know all the resources of art, the tricks of style, and the efforts made in their compositions by writers who do not lack skill; but you will acknowledge that literature could never find such language in its assumed pathos; there is nothing so terrible as truth. Here is the letter written by this woman, or rather by this anguish:—

"'Monsieur Maurice,—

"'I know all your uncle could say to me; he is not better informed than my own conscience. Conscience is the interpreter of God to man. I know that if I am not reconciled to Octave, I shall be damned; that is the sentence of religious law. Civil law condemns me to obey, cost what it may. If my husband does not reject me, the world will regard me as pure, as virtuous, whatever I may have done. Yes, that much is sublime in marriage: society ratifies the husband's forgiveness; but it forgets that the forgiveness must be accepted. Legally, religiously, and from the world's point of view I ought to go back to Octave. Keeping only to the human aspect of the question, is it not cruel to refuse him happiness, to deprive him of children, to wipe his name out of the Golden Book and the list of peers? My sufferings, my repugnance, my feelings, all my egoism—for I know that I am an egotist—ought to be sacrificed to the family. I shall be a mother; the caresses of my child will wipe away many tears! I shall be very happy; I certainly shall be much looked up to. I shall ride, haughty and wealthy, in a handsome carriage! I shall have servants and a fine house, and be the queen of as many parties as there are weeks in the year. The world will receive me handsomely. I shall not have to climb up again to the heaven of aristocracy, I shall never have come down from it. So God, the law, society are all in accord.

"'"What are you rebelling against?" I am asked from the height of heaven, from the pulpit, from the judge's bench, and from the throne, whose august intervention may at need be invoked by the Count. Your uncle, indeed, at need, would speak to me of a certain celestial grace which will flood my heart when I know the pleasure of doing my duty.

"'God, the law, the world, and Octave all wish me to live, no doubt. Well, if there is no other difficulty, my reply cuts the knot: I will not live. I will become quite white and innocent again; for I will lie in my shroud, white with the blameless pallor of death. This is not in the least "mulish obstinacy." That mulish obstinacy of which you jestingly accused me is in a woman the result of confidence, of a vision of the future. Though my husband, sublimely generous, may forget all, I shall not forget. Does forgetfulness depend on our will? When a widow re-marries,

love makes a girl of her; she marries a man she loves. But I cannot love the Count. It all lies in that, do not you see?

"'Every time my eyes met his I should see my sin in them, even when his were full of love. The greatness of his generosity would be the measure of the greatness of my crime. My eyes, always uneasy, would be forever reading an invisible condemnation. My heart would be full of confused and struggling memories; marriage can never move me to the cruel rapture, the mortal delirium of passion. I should kill my husband by my coldness, by comparisons which he would guess, though hidden in the depths of my conscience. Oh! on the day when I should read a trace of involuntary, even of suppressed reproach in a furrow on his brow, in a saddened look, in some imperceptible gesture, nothing could hold me: I should be lying with a fractured skull on the pavement, and find that less hard than my husband. It might be my own oversusceptibility that would lead me to this horrible but welcome death; I might die the victim of an impatient mood in Octave caused by some matter of business, or be deceived by some unjust suspicion. Alas! I might even mistake some proof of love for a sign of contempt!

"'What torture on both sides! Octave would be always doubting me, I doubting him. I, quite involuntarily, should give him a rival wholly unworthy of him, a man whom I despise, but with whom I have known raptures branded on me with fire, which are my shame, but which I cannot forget.

"'Have I shown you enough of my heart? No one, Monsieur, can convince me that love may be renewed, for I neither can nor will accept love from anyone. A young bride is like a plucked flower; but a guilty wife is like a flower that had been walked over. You, who are a florist, you know whether it is ever possible to restore the broken stem, to revive the faded colors, to make the sap flow again in the tender vessels of which the whole vegetative function lies in their perfect rigidity. If some botanist should attempt the operation, could his genius smooth out the folds of the bruised corolla? If he could remake a flower, he would be God! God alone can remake me! I am drinking the bitter cup of expiation; but as I drink it I painfully spell out this sentence: Expiation is not annihilation.

"'In my little house, alone, I eat my bread soaked in tears; but no one sees me eat nor sees me weep. If I go back to Octave, I must give up my tears—they would offend him. Oh! Monsieur, how many virtues must a woman tread under foot, not to give herself, but to restore herself to a betrayed husband? Who could count them? God alone; for He alone can know and encourage the horrible refinements at which the angels must turn pale. Nay, I will go further. A woman has courage in the presence of her husband if he knows nothing; she shows a sort of fierce strength in her hypocrisy; she deceives him to secure him double happiness. But common knowledge is surely degrading. Supposing I could exchange humiliation for ecstasy? Would not Octave at last feel that my consent was sheer depravity? Marriage is based

on esteem, on sacrifices on both sides; but neither Octave nor I could esteem each other the day after our reunion. He would have disgraced me by a love like that of an old man for a courtesan, and I should forever feel the shame of being a chattel instead of a lady. I should represent pleasure, and not virtue, in his house. These are the bitter fruits of such a sin. I have made myself a bed where I can only toss on burning coals, a sleepless pillow.

"'Here, when I suffer, I bless my sufferings; I say to God, "I thank Thee!" But in my husband's house I should be full of sorrow, tasting joys to which I have no right.

"'All this, Monsieur, is not argument; it is the feeling of a soul made vast and hollow by seven years of suffering. Finally, must I make a horrible confession? I shall always feel at my bosom the lips of a child conceived in rapture and joy, and in the belief in happiness, of a child I nursed for seven months, that I shall bear in my womb all the days of my life. If other children should draw their nourishment from me, they would drink in tears mingling with the milk, and turning it sour. I seem a light thing, you regard me as a child—Ah yes! I have a child's memory, the memory which returns to us on the verge of the tomb. So, you see, there is not a situation in that beautiful life to which the world and my husband's love want to recall me, which is not a false position, which does not cover a snare or reveal a precipice down which I must fall, torn by pitiless rocks. For five years now I have been wandering in the sandy desert of the future without finding a place convenient to repent in, because my soul is possessed by true repentance.

"'Religion has its answers ready to all this, and I know them by heart. This suffering, these difficulties, are my punishment, she says, and God will give me strength to endure them. This, Monsieur, is an argument to certain pious souls gifted with an energy which I have not. I have made my choice between this hell, where God does not forbid my blessing Him, and the hell that awaits me under Count Octave's roof.

"'One word more. If I were still a girl, with the experience I now have, my husband is the man I should choose; but that is the very reason of my refusal. I could not bear to blush before that man. What! I should be always on my knees, he always standing upright; and if we were to exchange positions, I should scorn him! I will not be better treated by him in consequence of my sin. The angel who might venture under such circumstances on certain liberties which are permissible when both are equally blameless, is not on earth; he dwells in heaven! Octave is full of delicate feeling, I know; but even in his soul (which, however generous, is a man's soul after all) there is no guarantee for the new life I should lead with him.

"'Come, then, and tell me where I may find the solitude, the peace, the silence, so kindly to irreparable woes, which you promised me.'

"After making this copy of the letter to preserve it complete, I went to the Rue Payenne. Anxiety had conquered

the power of opium. Octave was walking up and down his garden like a madman.

"'Answer that!' said I, giving him his wife's letter. 'Try to reassure the modesty of experience. It is rather more difficult than conquering the modesty of ignorance, which curiosity helps to betray.'

"'She is mine!' cried the Count, whose face expressed joy as he went on reading the letter.

"He signed to me with his hand to leave him to himself. I understood that extreme happiness and extreme pain obey the same laws: I went in to receive Madame de Courteville and Amélie, who were to dine with the Count that day. However handsome Mademoiselle de Courteville might be, I felt, on seeing her once more, that love has three aspects, and that the women who can inspire us with perfect love are very rare. As I involuntarily compared Amélie with Honorine, I found the erring wife more attractive than the pure girl. To Honorine's heart fidelity had not been a duty, but the inevitable; while Amélie would serenely pronounce the most solemn promises without knowing their purport or to what they bound her. The crushed, the dead woman, so to speak, the sinner to be reinstated, seemed to me sublime; she incited the special generosities of a man's nature; she demanded all the treasures of the heart, all the resources of strength; she filled his life and gave the zest of a conflict to happiness; whereas Amélie, chaste and confiding, would settle down into the sphere of peaceful motherhood, where the commonplace must be its poetry, and where my mind would find no struggle and no victory.

"Of the plains of Champagne and the snowy, storm-beaten but sublime Alps, what young man would choose the chalky, monotonous level? No; such comparisons are fatal and wrong on the threshold of the Mairie. Alas! only the experience of life can teach us that marriage excludes passion, that a family cannot have its foundation on the tempests of love. After having dreamed of impossible love, with its infinite caprices, after having tasted the tormenting delights of the ideal, I saw before me modest reality. Pity me, for what could be expected! And five-and-twenty I did not trust myself; but I took a manful resolution.

"I went back to the Count to announce the arrival of his relations, and I saw him grown young again in the reflected light of hope.

"'What ails you, Maurice?' said he, struck by my changed expression.

"'Monsieur le Comte——'

"'No longer Octave? You, to whom I shall owe my life, my happiness——'

"'My dear Octave, if you should succeed in bringing the Countess back to her duty, I have studied her well'—(he looked at me as Othello must have looked at Iago when Iago first contrived to insinuate a suspicion into the Moor's mind)—'she must never see me again; she must never know that Maurice was your secretary. Never mention my name to her, or all will be undone. . . . You have got me an appointment as Maître des Requêtes—well, get me instead some diplomatic post abroad, a consulship, and do not think of my mar-

rying Amélie.—Oh! do not be uneasy,' I added, seeing him draw himself up, 'I will play my part to the end.'

"'Poor boy!' said he, taking my hand, which he pressed, while he kept back the tears that were starting to his eyes.

"'You gave me gloves,' I said, laughing, 'but I have not put them on; that is all.'

"We then agreed as to what I was to do that evening at Honorine's house, whither I presently returned. It was now August; the day had been hot and stormy, but the storm hung overhead, the sky was like copper; the scent of the flowers was heavy, I felt as if I were in an oven, and caught myself wishing that the Countess might have set out for the Indies; but she was sitting on a wooden bench shaped like a sofa, under an arbor, in a loose dress of white muslin fastened with blue bows, her hair unadorned in waving bands over her cheeks, her feet on a small wooden stool, and showing a little way beyond her skirt. She did not rise; she showed me with her hand to the seat by her side, saying—

"'Now, is not life at a deadlock for me?'

"'Life as you have made it,' I replied. 'But not the life I propose to make for you; for, if you choose, you may be very happy. . . .'

"'How?' said she; her whole person was a question.

"'Your letter is in the Count's hands.'

"Honorine started like a frightened doe, sprang to a few paces off, walked down the garden, turned about, remained standing for some minutes, and finally went in to sit alone in the drawing-room, where I joined her, after giving her time to get accustomed to the pain of this poniard thrust.

"'You—a friend? Say rather a traitor! A spy, perhaps, sent by my husband.'

"Instinct in women is as strong as the perspicacity of great men.

"'You wanted an answer to your letter, did not you? And there was but one man in the world who could write it. You must read the reply, my dear Countess; and if after reading it you still find that your life is a deadlock, the spy will prove himself a friend; I will place you in a convent whence the Count's power cannot drag you. But, before going there, let us consider the other side of the question. There is a law, alike divine and human, which even hatred affects to obey, and which commands us not to condemn the accused without hearing his defense. Till now you have passed condemnation, as children do, with your ears stopped. The devotion of seven years has its claims. So you must read the answer your husband will send you. I have forwarded to him, through my uncle, a copy of your letter, and my uncle asked him what his reply would be if his wife wrote him a letter in such terms. Thus you are not compromised. He will himself bring the Count's answer. In the presence of that saintly man, and in mine, out of respect for your own dignity, you must read it, or you will be no better than a willful, passionate child. You must make this sacrifice to the world, to the law, and to God.'

"As she saw in this concession no attack on her womanly resolve, she

consented. All the labor of four or five months had been building up to this moment. But do not the Pyramids end in a point on which a bird may perch? The Count had set all his hopes on this supreme instant, and he had reached it.

"In all my life I remember nothing more formidable than my uncle's entrance into that little Pompadour drawing-room, at ten that evening. The fine head, with its silver hair thrown into relief by the entirely black dress, and the divinely calm face, had a magical effect on the Comtesse Honorine; she had the feeling of cool balm on her wounds, and beamed in the reflection of that virtue which gave light without knowing it.

"'Monsieur the Curé of the White Friars,' said old Gobain.

"'Are you come, uncle, with a message of happiness and peace?' said I.

"'Happiness and peace are always to be found in obedience to the precepts of the Church,' replied my uncle, and he handed the Countess the following letter:—

"'My dear Honorine,—

"'If you had but done me the favor of trusting me, if you had read the letter I wrote to you five years since, you would have spared yourself five years of useless labor, and of privations which have grieved me deeply. In it I proposed an arrangement of which the stipulations will relieve all your fears, and make our domestic life possible. I have much to reproach myself with, and in seven years of sorrow I have discovered all my errors. I misunderstood marriage. I failed to scent danger when it threatened you. An angel was in my house. The Lord bid me guard it well! The Lord has punished me for my audacious confidence.

"'You cannot give yourself a single lash without striking me. Have mercy on me, my dear Honorine. I so fully appreciated your susceptibilities that I would not bring you back to the old house in the Rue Payenne, where I can live without you, but which I could not bear to see again with you. I am decorating, with great pleasure, another house, in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, to which, in hope, I conduct not a wife whom I owe to her ignorance of life, and secured to me by law, but a sister who will allow me to press on her brow such a kiss as a father gives the daughter he blesses every day.

"'Will you bereave me of the right I have conquered from your despair—that of watching more closely over your needs, your pleasures, your life even? Women have one heart always on their side, always abounding in excuses—their mother's; you never knew any mother but my mother, who would have brought you back to me. But how is it that you never guessed that I had for you the heart of a mother, both of my mother and of your own? Yes, dear, my affection is neither mean nor grasping; it is one of those which will never let any annoyance last long enough to pucker the brow of the child it worships. What can you think of the companion of your childhood, Honorine, if you believe him capable of accepting kisses given in trembling, of living between delight and anxiety? Do not fear that you will be exposed to the laments of a suppliant passion; I would not want you back until I felt

certain of my own strength to leave you in perfect freedom.

"'Your solitary pride has exaggerated the difficulties. You may, if you will, look on at the life of a brother, or of a father, without either suffering or joy; but you will find neither mockery nor indifference, nor have any doubt as to his intentions. The warmth of the atmosphere in which you live will be always equable and genial, without tempests, without a possible squall. If, later, when you feel secure that you are as much at home as in your own little house, you desire to try some other elements of happiness, pleasures, or amusements, you can expand their circle at your will. The tenderness of a mother knows neither contempt nor pity. What is it? Love without desire. Well, in me admiration shall hide every sentiment in which you might see an offense.

"'Thus, living side by side, we may both be magnanimous. In you the kindness of a sister, the affectionate thoughtfulness of a friend, will satisfy the ambition of him who wishes to be your life's companion; and you may measure his tenderness by the care he will take to conceal it. Neither you nor I will be jealous of the past, for we may each acknowledge that the other has sense enough to look only straight forward.

"'Thus you will be at home in your new house exactly as you are in the Rue Saint-Maur; unapproachable, alone, occupied as you please, living by your own law; but having in addition the legitimate protection, of which you are now exacting the most chivalrous labors of love, with the consideration which lends so much luster to a woman, and the fortune which will allow of your doing many good works. Honorine, when you long for an unnecessary absolution, you have only to ask for it; it will not be forced upon you by the Church or by the Law; it will wait on your pride, on your own impulsion. My wife might indeed have to fear all the things you dread; but not my friend and sister, towards whom I am bound to show every form and refinement of politeness. To see you happy is enough happiness for me; I have proved this for these seven years past. The guarantee for this, Honorine, is to be seen in all the flowers made by you, carefully preserved, and watered by my tears. Like the *quipos,* the tally cords of the Peruvians, they are the record of our sorrows.

"'If this secret compact does not suit you, my child, I have begged the saintly man who takes charge of this letter not to say a word in my behalf. I will not owe your return to the terrors threatened by the Church, nor to the bidding of the Law. I will not accept the simple and quiet happiness that I ask from anyone but yourself. If you persist in condemning me to the lonely life, bereft even of a fraternal smile, which I have led for nine years, if you remain in your solitude and show no sign, my will yields to yours. Understand me perfectly: you shall be no more troubled than you have been until this day. I will get rid of the crazy fellow who has meddled in your concerns, and has perhaps caused you some annoyance. . . .

"'Monsieur,' said Honorine, folding up the letter, which she placed in her

bosom, and looking at my uncle, 'thank you very much. I will avail myself of Monsieur le Comte's permission to remain here——'

"'Ah!' I exclaimed.

"This exclamation made my uncle look at me uneasily, and won from the Countess a mischievous glance, which enlightened me as to her motives.

"Honorine had wanted to ascertain whether I were an actor, a bird snarer; and I had the melancholy satisfaction of deceiving her by my exclamation, which was one of those cries from the heart which women understand so well.

"'Ah, Maurice,' said she, 'you know how to love.'

"The light that flashed in my eyes was another reply which would have dissipated the Countess's uneasiness if she still had any. Thus the Count found me useful to the very last.

"Honorine then took out the Count's letter again to finish reading it. My uncle signed to me, and I rose.

"'Let us leave the Countess,' said he.

"'You are going already, Maurice?' she said, without looking at me.

"She rose, and still reading, followed us to the door. On the threshold she took my hand, pressed it very affectionately, and said, 'We shall meet again . . .'

"'No,' I replied, wringing her hand, so that she cried out. 'You love your husband. I leave to-morrow.'

"And I rushed away, leaving my uncle, to whom she said—

"'Why, what is the matter with your nephew?'

"The good Abbé completed my work by pointing to his head and heart, as much as to say, 'He is mad, madame; you must forgive him!' and with all the more truth, because he really thought it.

"Six days after, I set out with an appointment as vice-consul in Spain, in a large commercial town, where I could quickly qualify to rise in the career of a consul, to which I now restricted my ambition. After I had established myself there, I received this letter from the Count:—

"'My dear Maurice,—

"'If I were happy, I should not write to you, but I have entered on a new life of suffering. I have grown young again in my desires, with all the impatience of a man of forty, and the prudence of a diplomatist, who has learned to moderate his passion. When you left I had not yet been admitted to the *pavillon* in the Rue Saint-Maur, but a letter had promised me that I should have permission—the mild and melancholy letter of a woman who dreaded the agitations of a meeting. After waiting for more than a month, I made bold to call, and desired Gobain to inquire whether I could be received. I sat down in a chair in the avenue near the lodge, my head buried in my hands, and there I remained for almost an hour.

"'"Madame had to dress," said Gobain, to hide Honorine's hesitancy under a pride of appearance which was flattering to me.

"'During a long quarter of an hour we both of us were possessed by an involuntary nervous trembling as great as that which seizes a speaker on the platform, and we spoke to each other in scared phrases, like those of persons

taken by surprise who "make believe" a conversation.

"'"You see, Honorine," said I, my eyes full of tears, "the ice is broken, and I am so tremulous with happiness that you must forgive the incoherency of my language. It will be so for a long time yet."

"'"There is no crime in being in love with your wife," said she with a forced smile.

"'"Do me the favor," said I, "no longer to work as you do. I have heard from Madame Gobain that for three weeks you have been living on your savings; you have sixty thousand francs a year of your own, and if you cannot give me back your heart, at least do not abandon your fortune to me."

"'"I have long known your kindness," said she.

"'"Though you should prefer to remain here," said I, "and to preserve your independence; though the most ardent love should find no favor in your eyes, still, do not toil."

"'I gave her three certificates for twelve thousand francs a year each; she took them, opened them languidly, and after reading them through, she gave me only a look as my reward. She fully understood that I was not offering her money, but freedom.

"'"I am conquered," said she, holding out her hand, which I kissed. "Come and see me as often as you like."

"'So she had done herself a violence in receiving me. Next day I found her armed with affected high spirits, and it took two months of habit before I saw here in her true character. But then it was like a delicious May, a springtime of love that gave me ineffable bliss; she was no longer afraid; she was studying me. Alas! when I proposed that she should go to England to return ostensibly to me, to our home, that she should resume her rank and live in our new residence, she was seized with alarm.

"'"Why not live always as we are?" she said.

"'I submitted without saying a word.

"'"Is she making an experiment?" I asked myself as I left her. On my way from my own house to the Rue Saint-Maur thoughts of love had swelled in my heart, and I had said to myself, like a young man, "This evening she will yield."

"'All my real or affected force was blown to the winds by a smile, by a command from those proud, calm eyes, untouched by passion. I remembered the terrible words you once quoted to me, "Lucretia's dagger wrote in letters of blood the watchword of woman's charter—Liberty!" and they froze me. I felt imperatively how necessary to me was Honorine's consent, and how impossible it was to wring it from her. Could she guess the storms that distracted me when I left her as when I came?

"'At last I painted my situation in a letter to her, giving up the attempt to speak of it. Honorine made no answer, and she was so sad that I made as though I had not written. I was deeply grieved by the idea that I could have distressed her; she read my heart and forgave me. And this was how. Three days ago she received me, for the first time, in her own blue-and-white room. It was bright with flowers, dressed, and lighted up. Honorine was in a dress

that made her bewitching. Her hair framed that face that you know in its light curls; and in it were some sprays of Cape heath; she wore a white muslin gown, a white sash with long floating ends. You know what she is in such simplicity, but that day she was a bride, the Honorine of long past days. My joy was chilled at once, for her face was terribly grave; there were fires beneath the ice.

"'"Octave," she said, "I will return as your wife when you will. But understand clearly that this submission has its dangers. I can be resigned——"

"'I made a movement.

"'"Yes," she went on, "I understand: resignation offends you, and you want what I cannot give—Love. Religion and pity led me to renounce my vow of solitude; you are here!" She paused.

"'"At first," she went on, "you asked no more. Now you demand your wife. Well, here I give you Honorine, such as she is, without deceiving you as to what she will be.—What shall I be? A mother? I hope it. Believe me, I hope it eagerly. Try to change me: you have my consent; but if I should die, my dear, do not curse my memory, and do not set down to obstinacy what I should call the worship of the Ideal, if it were not more natural to call the indefinable feeling which must kill me the worship of the Divine! The future will be nothing to me; it will be your concern; consult your own mind."

"'And she sat down in the calm attitude you used to admire, and watched me turning pale with the pain she had inflicted. My blood ran cold. On seeing the effect of her words she took both my hands, and, holding them in her own, she said—

"'"Octave, I do love you, but not in the way you wish to be loved. I love your soul. . . . Still, understand that I love you enough to die in your service like an Eastern slave, and without a regret. It will be my expiation."

"'She did more; she knelt before me on a cushion, and in a spirit of sublime charity she said—

"'"And perhaps I shall not die!"

"'For two months now I have been struggling with myself. What shall I do? My heart is too full; I therefore seek a friend, and send out this cry, "What shall I do?"'"

"I did not answer this letter. Two months later the newspapers announced the return on board an English vessel of the Comtesse Octave, restored to her family after adventures by land and sea, invented with sufficient probability to arouse no contradiction.

"When I moved to Genoa I received a formal announcement of the happy event of the birth of a son to the Count and Countess. I held that letter in my hand for two hours, sitting on this terrace—on this bench. Two months after, urged by Octave, by M. de Grandville, and Monsieur de Sérizy, my kind friends, and broken by the death of my uncle, I agreed to take a wife.

"Six months after the revolution of July I received this letter, which concludes the story of this couple:—

"'Monsieur Maurice,—I am dying though I am a mother—perhaps because I am a mother. I have played my part as a wife well; I have deceived my

husband. I have had happiness not less genuine than the tears shed by actresses on the stage. I am dying for society, for the family, for marriage, as the early Christians died for God. I know not of what I am dying, and I am honestly trying to find out, for I am not perverse; but I am bent on explaining my malady to you—you who brought that heavenly physician your uncle, at whose word I surrendered. He was my director; I nursed him in his last illness, and he showed me the way to heaven, bidding me persevere in my duty.

"'And I have done my duty.

"'I do not blame those who forget. I admire them as strong and necessary natures; but I have the malady of memory! I have not been able twice to feel that love of the heart which identifies a woman with the man she loves. To the last moment, as you know, I cried to your heart, in the confessional, and to my husband, "Have mercy!" But there was no mercy. Well, and I am dying, dying with stupendous courage. No courtesan was ever more gay than I. My poor Octave is happy; I let his love feed on the illusions of my heart. I throw all my powers into this terrible masquerade; the actress is applauded, feasted, smothered in flowers; but the invisible rival comes every day to seek its prey—a fragment of my life. I am rent and I smile. I smile on two children, but it is the elder, the dead one, that will triumph! I told you so before. The dead child calls me, and I am going to him.

"'The intimacy of marriage without love is a position in which my soul feels degraded every hour. I can never weep or give myself up to dreams but when I am alone. The exigencies of society, the care of my child, and that of Octave's happiness never leave me a moment to refresh myself, to renew my strength, as I could in my solitude. The incessant need for watchfulness startles my heart with constant alarms. I have not succeeded in implanting in my soul the sharp-eared vigilance that lies with facility, and has the eyes of a lynx. It is not the lips of one I love that drinks my tears and kisses my eyelids; it is a handkerchief that dries them; my burning eyes are cooled with water, and not with tender lips. It is my soul that acts a part, and that perhaps is why I am dying! I lock up my grief with so much care that nothing is to be seen of it; it must eat into something, and it has attacked my life.

"'I said to the doctors, who discovered my secret, "Make me die of some plausible complaint, or I shall drag my husband with me."

"'So it is quite understood by M. Desplein, Bianchon, and myself that I am dying of the softening of some bone which science has fully described. Octave believes that I adore him, do you understand? So I am afraid lest he should follow me. I now write to beg you in that case to be the little Count's guardian. You will find with this a codicil in which I have expressed my wish; but do not produce it excepting in case of need, for perhaps I am fatuously vain. My devotion may perhaps leave Octave inconsolable but willing to live.—Poor Octave! I wish him a better wife than I am, for he deserves to be well loved.

"'Since my spiritual spy is married, I bid him remember what the florist of

the Rue Saint-Maur hereby bequeaths to him as a lesson: May your wife soon be a mother! Fling her into the vulgarest materialism of household life; hinder her from cherishing in her heart the mysterious flower of the Ideal—of that heavenly perfection in which I believed, that enchanted blossom with glorious colors, and whose perfume disgusts us with reality. I am a Saint Theresa who has not been suffered to live on ecstasy in the depths of a convent, with the Holy Infant, and a spotless winged angel to come and go as she wished.

"'You saw me happy among my beloved flowers. I did not tell you all: I saw love budding under your affected madness, and I concealed from you my thoughts, my poetry; I did not admit you to my kingdom of beauty. Well, well; you will love my child for love of me if he should one day lose his poor father. Keep my secrets as the grave will keep them. Do not mourn for me; I have been dead this many a day, if Saint Bernard was right in saying that where there is no more love there is no more life.'"

"And the Countess died," said the Consul, putting away the letters and locking the pocket-book.

"Is the Count still living?" asked the Ambassador, "for since the revolution of July he has disappeared from the political stage."

"Do you remember, Monsieur de Lora," said the Consul-General, "having seen me going to the steamboat with——"

"A white-haired man! an old man?" said the painter.

"An old man of forty-five, going in search of health and amusement in Southern Italy. That old man was my poor friend, my patron, passing through Genoa to take leave of me and place his will in my hands. He appoints me his son's guardian. I had no occasion to tell him of Honorine's wishes."

"Does he suspect himself of murder?" said Mademoiselle des Touches to the Baron de L'Hostal.

"He suspects the truth," replied the Consul, "and that is what is killing him. I remained on board the steam packet that was to take him to Naples till it was out of the roadstead; a small boat brought me back. We sat for some little time taking leave of each other—forever, I fear. God only knows how much we love the confidant of our love when she who inspired it is no more.

"'That man,' said Octave, 'holds a charm and wears an aureole.' The Count went to the prow and looked down on the Mediterranean. It happened to be fine, and, moved no doubt by the spectacle, he spoke these last words: 'Ought we not, in the interests of human nature, to inquire what is the irresistible power which leads us to sacrifice an exquisite creature to the most fugitive of all pleasures, and in spite of our reason? In my conscience I heard cries. Honorine was not alone in her anguish. And yet I would have it! . . . I am consumed by remorse. In the Rue Payenne I was dying of the joys I had not; now I shall die in Italy of the joys I have had. . . . Wherein lay the discord between two natures, equally noble, I dare assert?'"

For some minutes profound silence on the terrace.

Then the Consul, turning to the two women, asked, "Was she virtuous?"

Mademoiselle des Touches rose, took the Consul's arm, went a few steps away, and said to him—

"Are not men wrong too when they come to us and make a young girl a wife while cherishing at the bottom of their heart some angelic image, and comparing us to those unknown rivals, to perfections often borrowed from a remembrance, and always finding us wanting?"

"Mademoiselle, you would be right if marriage were based on passion; and that was the mistake of those two, who will soon be no more. Marriage with heart-deep love on both sides would be Paradise."

Mademoiselle des Touches turned from the Consul, and was immediately joined by Claude Vignon, who said in her ear—

"A bit of a coxcomb is M. de L'Hostal."

"No," replied she, whispering to Claude these words: "for he has not yet guessed that Honorine would have loved him.—Oh!" she exclaimed, seeing the Consul's wife approaching, "his wife was listening! Unhappy man!"

Eleven was striking by all the clocks, and the guests went home on foot along the seashore.

"Still, that is not life," said Mademoiselle des Touches. "That woman was one of the rarest, and perhaps the most extraordinary exceptions in intellect—a pearl! Life is made up of various incidents, of pain and pleasure alternately. The Paradise of Dante, that sublime expression of the ideal, that perpetual blue, is to be found only in the soul; to ask it of the facts of life is a luxury against which nature protests every hour. To such souls as those the six feet of a cell, and the kneeling chair are all they need."

"You are right," said Léon de Lora; "but good-for-nothing as I may be, I cannot help admiring a woman who is capable, as that one was, of living by the side of a studio, under a painter's roof, and never coming down, nor seeing the world, nor dipping her feet in the street mud."

"Such a thing has been known—for a few months," said Claude Vignon, with deep irony.

"Comtesse Honorine is not unique of her kind," replied the Ambassador to Mademoiselle des Touches. "A man, nay, and a politician, a bitter writer, was the object of such a passion; and the pistol shot which killed him hit not him alone; the woman who loved lived like a nun ever after."

"Then there are yet some great souls in this age!" said Camille Maupin, and she stood for some minutes pensively leaning on the balustrade of the quay.

The Sceaux Ball

(Le Bal de Sceaux)

To Henri de Balzac, his brother Honoré

The Comte de Fontaine, head of one of the oldest families in Poitou, had served the Bourbon cause with intelligence and bravery during the war in La Vendée against the Republic. After having escaped all the dangers which threatened the Royalist leaders during this stormy period of modern history, he was wont to say in jest, "I am one of the men who gave themselves to be killed on the steps of the throne." And the pleasantry had some truth in it, as spoken by a man left for dead at the bloody battle of Les Quatre Chemins. Though ruined by confiscation, the stanch Vendéen steadily refused the lucrative posts offered to him by the Emperor Napoleon. Immovable in his aristocratic faith, he had blindly obeyed its precepts when he thought it fitting to choose a companion for life. In spite of the blandishments of a rich but revolutionary parvenu, who valued the alliance at a high figure, he married Mlle. de Kergarouët, without a fortune, but belonging to one of the oldest families in Brittany.

When the second revolution burst on M. de Fontaine he was encumbered with a large family. Though it was no part of the noble gentleman's view to solicit favors, he yielded to his wife's wish, left his country estate, of which the income barely sufficed to maintain his children, and came to Paris. Saddened by seeing the greediness of his former comrades in the rush for places and dignities under the new Constitution, he was about to return to his property when he received a ministerial dispatch, in which a well-known magnate announced to him his nomination as *maréchal de camp,* or brigadier-general, under a rule which allowed the officers of the Catholic armies to count the twenty submerged years of Louis XVIII.'s reign as years of service. Some days later he further received, without any solicitation, *ex officio,* the crosses of the Legion of Honor and of Saint-Louis.

Shaken in his determination by these successive favors, due, as he supposed, to the monarch's remembrance, he was no longer satisfied with taking his family, as he had piously done every Sunday, to cry "Vive le Roi!" in the hall of the Tuileries when the royal family passed through on their way to chapel; he craved the favor of a private audience. The audience, at once granted, was in no sense private. The royal drawing-room was full of old adherents whose powdered heads, seen from above, suggested a carpet of snow. There the Comte met some old friends, who received him somewhat coldly; but the princes he thought *adorable,* an enthusiastic expression which escaped him when the most gracious of his masters, to whom the Comte had supposed himself to be known only by name, came to shake hands with him, and spoke of him as the most thorough Vendéen of them all. Notwithstanding this ovation, none of these august persons thought of inquiring as to the sum of his losses, or of the money he had poured so generously into the chests of the Catholic

regiments. He discovered, a little late, that he had made war at his own cost. Towards the end of the evening he thought he might venture on a witty allusion to the state of his affairs, similar, as it was, to that of many other gentlemen. His Majesty laughed heartily enough; any speech that bore the hall-mark of wit was certain to please him; but he nevertheless replied with one of those royal pleasantries whose sweetness is more formidable than the anger of a rebuke. One of the King's most intimate advisers took an opportunity of going up to the fortune-seeking Vendéen, and made him understand by a keen and polite hint that the time had not yet come for settling accounts with the sovereign; that there were bills of much longer standing than his on the books, and there, no doubt, they would remain, as part of the history of the Revolution. The Count prudently withdrew from the venerable group, which formed a respectful semicircle before the august family; then, having extricated his sword, not without some difficulty, from among the lean legs which had got mixed up with it, he crossed the courtyard of the Tuileries and got into the hackney cab he had left on the quay. With the restive spirit, which is peculiar to the nobility of the old school, in whom still survives the memory of the League and the day of the Barricades (in 1588), he bewailed himself in his cab, loudly enough to compromise him, over the change that had come over the Court. "Formerly," he said to himself, "everyone could speak freely to the King of his own little affairs; the nobles could ask him a favor, or for money, when it suited them, and nowadays one cannot recover the money advanced for his service without raising a scandal! By Heaven! the cross of Saint-Louis and the rank of brigadier-general will not make good the three hundred thousand livres I have spent, out and out, on the royal cause. I must speak to the King, face to face, in his own room."

This scene cooled M. de Fontaine's ardor all the more effectually because his requests for an interview were never answered. And, indeed, he saw the upstarts of the Empire obtaining some of the offices reserved, under the old monarchy, for the highest families.

"All is lost!" he exclaimed one morning. "The King has certainly never been other than a revolutionary. But for Monsieur, who never derogates, and is some comfort to his faithful adherents, I do not know what hands the crown of France might not fall into if things are to go on like this. Their cursed constitutional system is the worst possible government, and can never suit France. Louis XVIII. and M. Beugnot spoiled everything at Saint-Ouen."

The Count, in despair, was preparing to retire to his estate, abandoning, with dignity, all claims to repayment. At this moment the events of the 20th March (1815) gave warning of a fresh storm, threatening to overwhelm the legitimate monarch and his defenders. M. de Fontaine, like one of those generous souls who do not dismiss a servant in a torrent of rain, borrowed on his lands to follow the routed monarchy, without knowing whether this complicity in emigration would prove more propitious to him than his past devotion. But when he perceived that the companions of the King's exile were in

higher favor than the brave men who had protested, sword in hand, against the establishment of the Republic, he may perhaps have hoped to derive greater profit from this journey into a foreign land than from active and dangerous service in the heart of his own country. Nor was his courtier-like calculation one of those rash speculations which promise splendid results on paper, and are ruinous in effect. He was—to quote the wittiest and most successful of our diplomats—one of the faithful five hundred who shared the exile of the Court at Ghent, and one of the fifty thousand who returned with it. During the short banishment of royalty, M. de Fontaine was so happy as to be employed by Louis XVIII., and found more than one opportunity of giving him proofs of great political honesty and sincere attachment. One evening, when the King had nothing better to do, he recalled M. Fontaine's witticism at the Tuileries. The old Vendéen did not let such a happy chance slip; he told his history with so much vivacity that a king, who never forgot anything, might remember it at a convenient season. The royal amateur of literature also observed the elegant style given to some notes which the discreet gentleman had been invited to recast. This little success stamped M. de Fontaine on the King's memory as one of the loyal servants of the Crown.

At the second restoration the Count was one of those special envoys who were sent throughout the departments charged with absolute jurisdiction over the leaders of revolt; but he used his terrible powers with moderation. As soon as this temporary commission was ended, the High Provost found a seat in the Privy Council, became a deputy, spoke little, listened much, and changed his opinions very considerably. Certain circumstances, unknown to historians, brought him into such intimate relations with the Sovereign, that one day, as he came in, the shrewd monarch addressed him thus: "My friend Fontaine, I shall take care never to appoint you to be director-general, or minister. Neither you nor I, as employés, could keep our place on account of our opinions. Representative government has this advantage: it saves Us the trouble We used to have, of dismissing Our Secretaries of State. Our Council is a perfect inn-parlor, whither public opinion sometimes sends strange travelers; however, We can always find a place for Our faithful adherents."

This ironical speech was introductory to a rescript giving M. de Fontaine an appointment as administrator in the office of Crown lands. As a consequence of the intelligent attention with which he listened to his royal Friend's sarcasms, his name always rose to his Majesty's lips when a commission was to be appointed of which the members were to receive a handsome salary. He had the good sense to hold his tongue about the favor with which he was honored, and knew how to entertain the monarch in those familiar chats in which Louis XVIII. delighted as much as in a well-written note, by his brilliant manner of repeating political anecdotes, and the political or parliamentary tittle-tattle—if the expression may pass—which at that time was rife. It is well known that he was immensely amused by every detail of his *Gouvernementabilité*—a

word adopted by his facetious Majesty.

Thanks to the Comte de Fontaine's good sense, wit, and tact, every member of his numerous family, however young, ended, as he jestingly told his Sovereign, in attaching himself like a silkworm to the leaves of the Pay-List. Thus, by the King's intervention, his eldest son found a high and fixed position as a lawyer. The second, before the Restoration a mere captain, was appointed to the command of a legion on the return from Ghent; then, thanks to the confusion of 1815, when the regulations were evaded, he passed into the bodyguard, returned to a line regiment, and found himself after the affair of the Trocadéro a lieutenant-general with a commission in the Guards. The youngest, appointed sous-préfet, erelong became a legal official and director of a municipal board of the city of Paris, where he was safe from changes in the Legislature. These bounties, bestowed without parade, and as secret as the favor enjoyed by the Count, fell unperceived. Though the father and his three sons each had sinecures enough to enjoy an income in salaries almost equal to that of a chief of department, their political good fortune excited no envy. In those early days of the constitutional system, few persons had very precise ideas of the peaceful domain of the civil service, where astute favorites managed to find an equivalent for the demolished abbeys. M. le Comte de Fontaine, who till lately boasted that he had not read the Charter, and displayed such indignation at the greed of courtiers, had, before long, proved to his august master that he understood, as well as the King himself, the spirit and resources of the representative system. At the same time, notwithstanding the established careers open to his three sons, and the pecuniary advantages derived from four official appointments, M. de Fontaine was the head of too large a family to be able to reestablish his fortune easily and rapidly.

His three sons were rich in prospects, in favor, and in talent; but he had three daughters, and was afraid of wearying the monarch's benevolence. It occurred to him to mention only one by one these virgins eager to light their torches. The King had too much good taste to leave his work incomplete. The marriage of the eldest with a receiver-general, Planat de Baudry, was arranged by one of those royal speeches which cost nothing and are worth millions. One evening, when the Sovereign was out of spirits, he smiled on hearing of the existence of another Demoiselle de Fontaine, for whom he found a husband in the person of a young magistrate, of inferior birth, no doubt, but wealthy, and whom he created Baron. When, the year after, the Vendéen spoke of Mlle Émilie de Fontaine, the King replied in his thin, sharp tones, *"Amicus Plato sed magis amica Natio."* Then, a few days later, he treated his "friend Fontaine" to a quatrain, harmless enough, which he styled an epigram, in which he made fun of these three daughters so skillfully introduced, under the form of a trinity. Nay, if report is to be believed, the monarch had found the point of the jest in the Unity of the three Divine Persons.

"If Your Majesty would only condescend to turn the epigram into an epithalamium?" said the Comte, trying to turn the sally to good account.

"Though I see the rhyme of it, I fail

to see the reason," retorted the King, who did not relish any pleasantry, however mild, on the subject of his poetry.

From that day his intercourse with M. de Fontaine showed less amenity. Kings enjoy contradicting more than people think. Like most youngest children, Émilie de Fontaine was a Benjamin spoilt by almost everybody. The King's coolness, therefore, caused the Count all the more regret, because no marriage was ever so difficult to arrange as that of this darling daughter. To understand all the obstacles we must make our way into the fine residence where the official was housed at the expense of the nation. Émilie had spent her childhood on the family estate, enjoying the abundance which suffices for the joys of early youth; her lightest wishes had been law to her sisters, her brothers, her mother, and even her father. All her relations doted on her. Having come to years of discretion just when her family was loaded with the favors of fortune, the enchantment of life continued. The luxury of Paris seemed to her just as natural as a wealth of flowers or fruit, or as the rural plenty which had been the joy of her first years. Just as in her childhood she had never been thwarted in the satisfaction of her playful desires, so now, at fourteen, she was still obeyed when she rushed into the whirl of fashion.

Thus, accustomed by degrees to the enjoyment of money, elegance of dress, of gilded drawing-rooms and fine carriages, became as necessary to her as the compliments of flattery, sincere or false, and the festivities and vanities of court life. Like most spoilt children, she tyrannized over those who loved her, and kept her blandishments for those who were indifferent. Her faults grew with her growth, and her parents were to gather the bitter fruits of this disastrous education. At the age of nineteen Émilie de Fontaine had not yet been pleased to make a choice from among the many young men whom her father's politics brought to his entertainments. Though so young, she asserted in society all the freedom of mind that a married woman can enjoy. Her beauty was so remarkable that, for her, to appear in a room was to be its queen; but, like sovereigns, she had no friends, though she was everywhere the object of attentions to which a finer nature than hers might perhaps have succumbed. Not a man, not even an old man, had it in him to contradict the opinions of a young girl whose lightest look could re-kindle love in the coldest heart.

She had been educated with a care which her sisters had not enjoyed; painted pretty well, spoke Italian and English, and played the piano brilliantly; her voice, trained by the best masters, had a ring in it which made her singing irresistibly charming. Clever, and intimate with every branch of literature, she might have made folks believe that, as Mascarille says, people of quality come into the world knowing everything. She could argue fluently on Italian or Flemish painting, on the Middle Ages or the Renaissance; pronounced at haphazard on books new or old, and could expose the defects of a work with a cruelly graceful wit. The simplest thing she said was accepted by an admiring crowd as a *fetfah* of the Sultan by the Turks. She thus dazzled shallow persons; as to deeper minds, her natural

tact enabled her to discern them, and for them she put forth so much fascination that, under cover of her charms, she escaped their scrutiny. This enchanting veneer covered a careless heart; the opinion—common to many young girls—that no one else dwelt in a sphere so lofty as to be able to understand the merits of her soul; and a pride based no less on her birth than on her beauty. In the absence of the overwhelming sentiment which, sooner or later, works havoc in a woman's heart, she spent her young ardor in an immoderate love of distinctions, and expressed the deepest contempt for persons of inferior birth. Supremely impertinent to all newly-created nobility, she made every effort to get her parents recognized as equals by the most illustrious families of the Saint-Germain quarter.

These sentiments had not escaped the observing eye of M. de Fontaine, who more than once, when his two elder girls were married, had smarted under Émilie's sarcasm. Logical readers will be surprised to see the old Royalist bestowing his eldest daughter on a receiver-general, possessed, indeed, of some old hereditary estates, but whose name was not preceded by the little word to which the throne owed so many partisans, and his second to a magistrate too lately baronified to obscure the fact that his father had sold fire-wood. This noteworthy change in the ideas of a noble on the verge of his sixtieth year—an age when men rarely renounce their convictions—was due not merely to his unfortunate residence in the modern Babylon, where, sooner or later, country folks all get their corners rubbed down; the Comte de Fontaine's new political conscience was also a result of the King's advice and friendship. The philosophical Prince had taken pleasure in converting the Vendéen to the ideas required by the advance of the nineteenth century, and the new aspect of the Monarchy. Louis XVIII. aimed at fusing parties as Napoleon had fused things and men. The legitimate King, who was not less clever perhaps than his rival, acted in a contrary direction. The last head of the House of Bourbon was just as eager to satisfy the third estate and the creations of the Empire, by curbing the clergy, as the first of the Napoleons had been to attract the grand old nobility, or to endow the Church. The Privy Councilor, being in the secret of these royal projects, had insensibly become one of the most prudent and influential leaders of that moderate party which most desired a fusion of opinion in the interests of the nation. He preached the expensive doctrines of constitutional government, and lent all his weight to encourage the political see-saw which enabled his master to rule France in the midst of storms. Perhaps M. de Fontaine hoped that one of the sudden gusts of legislation, whose unexpected efforts then startled the oldest politicians, might carry him up to the rank of peer. One of his most rigid principles was to recognize no nobility in France but that of the peerage—the only families that might enjoy any privileges.

"A nobility bereft of privileges," he would say, "is a tool without a handle."

As far from Lafayette's party as he was from la Bourdonnaye's, he ardently engaged in the task of general reconciliation, which was to result in a new

era and splendid fortunes for France. He strove to convince the families who frequented his drawing-room, or those whom he visited, how few favorable openings would henceforth be offered by a civil or military career. He urged mothers to give their boys a start in independent and industrial professions, explaining that military posts and high Government appointments must at last pertain, in a quite constitutional order, to the younger sons of members of the peerage. According to him, the people had conquered a sufficiently large share in practical government by its elective assembly, its appointments to law-offices, and those of the exchequer, which, said he, would always, as heretofore, be the natural right of the distinguished men of the third estate.

These new notions of the head of the Fontaines, and the prudent matches for his eldest girls to which they had led, met with strong resistance in the bosom of his family. The Comtesse de Fontaine remained faithful to the ancient beliefs which no woman could disown, who, through her mother, belonged to the Rohans. Although she had for a while opposed the happiness and fortune awaiting her two eldest girls, she yielded to those private considerations which husband and wife confide to each other when their heads are resting on the same pillow. M. de Fontaine calmly pointed out to his wife, by exact arithmetic, that their residence in Paris, the necessity for entertaining, the magnificence of the house which made up to them now for the privations so bravely shared in La Vandée, and the expenses of their sons, swallowed up the chief part of their income from salaries. They must, therefore seize, as a boon from Heaven, the opportunities which offered for settling their girls with such wealth. Would they not some day enjoy sixty—eighty—a hundred thousand francs a year? Such advantageous matches were not to be met with every day for girls without a portion. Again, it was time that they should begin to think of economizing, to add to the estate of Fontaine, and re-establish the old territorial fortune of the family. The Comtesse yielded to such cogent arguments, as every mother would have done in her place, though perhaps with a better grace; but she declared that Émilie, at any rate, should marry in such a way as to satisfy the pride she had unfortunately contributed to foster in the girl's young soul.

Thus events, which ought to have brought joy into the family, had introduced a small leaven of discord. The Receiver-General and the young lawyer were the objects of a ceremonious formality which the Comtesse and Émilie contrived to create. This etiquette soon found even ampler opportunity for the display of domestic tyranny; for Lieutenant-General de Fontaine married Mlle. Mongenod, the daughter of a rich banker; the Président very sensibly found a wife in a young lady whose father, twice or thrice a millionaire, had traded in salt; and the third brother, faithful to his plebeian doctrines, married Mlle. Grossetête, the only daughter of the Receiver-General at Bourges. The three sisters-in-law and the two brothers-in-law found the high sphere of political bigwigs, and the drawing-rooms of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, so full of charm and of personal advantages, that they united in forming a little court round

the overbearing Émilie. This treaty between interest and pride was not, however, so firmly cemented but that the young despot was, not unfrequently, the cause of revolts in her little realm. Scenes, which the highest circles would not have disowned, kept up a sarcastic temper among all the members of this powerful family; and this, without seriously diminishing the regard they professed in public, degenerated sometimes in private into sentiments far from charitable. Thus the Lieutenant-General's wife, having become a Baronne, thought herself quite as noble as a Kergarouët, and imagined that her good hundred thousand francs a year gave her the right to be as impertinent as her sister-in-law Émilie, whom she would sometimes wish to see happily married, as she announced that the daughter of some peer of France had married M. So-and-so with no title to his name. The Vicomtesse de Fontaine amused herself by eclipsing Émilie in the taste and magnificence that were conspicuous in her dress, her furniture, and her carriages. The satirical spirit in which her brothers and sisters sometimes received the claims avowed by Mlle. de Fontaine roused her to wrath that a perfect hailstorm of sharp sayings could hardly mitigate. So when the head of the family felt a slight chill in the King's tacit and precarious friendship, he trembled all the more because, as a result of her sisters' defiant mockery, his favorite daughter had never looked so high.

In the midst of these circumstances, and at a moment when this petty domestic warfare had become serious, the monarch, whose favor M. de Fontaine still hoped to regain, was attacked by the malady of which he was to die. The great political chief, who knew so well how to steer his bark in the midst of tempests, soon succumbed. Certain then of favors to come, the Comte de Fontaine made every effort to collect the élite of marrying men about his youngest daughter. Those who may have tried to solve the difficult problem of settling a haughty and capricious girl, will understand the trouble taken by the unlucky father. Such an affair, carried out to the liking of his beloved child, would worthily crown the career the Count had followed for these ten years at Paris. From the way in which his family claimed salaries under every department, it might be compared with the House of Austria, which, by intermarriage, threatens to pervade Europe. The old Vendéen was not to be discouraged in bringing forward suitors, so much had he his daughter's happiness at heart, but nothing could be more absurd than the way in which the impertinent young thing pronounced her verdicts and judged the merits of her adorers. It might have been supposed that, like a princess in the *Arabian Nights*, Émilie was rich enough and beautiful enough to choose from among all the princes in the world. Her objections were each more preposterous than the last: one had too thick knees and was bow-legged, another was short-sighted, this one's name was Durand, that one limped, and almost all were too fat. Livelier, more attractive, and gayer than ever after dismissing two or three suitors, she rushed into the festivities of the winter season, and to balls, where her keen eyes criticized the celebrities of the day, delighting in

encouraging proposals which she invariably rejected.

Nature had bestowed on her all the advantages needed for playing the part of Célimène. Tall and slight, Émilie de Fontaine could assume a dignified or a frolicsome mien at her will. Her neck was rather long, allowing her to affect beautiful attitudes of scorn and impertinence. She had cultivated a large variety of those turns of the head and feminine gestures, which emphasize so cruelly or so happily a hint or a smile. Fine black hair, thick and strongly-arched eyebrows, lent her countenance an expression of pride, to which her coquettish instincts and her mirror had taught her to add terror by a stare, or gentleness by the softness of her gaze, by the set or the gracious curve of her lips, by the coldness or the sweetness of her smile. When Émilie meant to conquer a heart, her pure voice did not lack melody; but she could also give it a sort of curt clearness when she was minded to paralyze a partner's indiscreet tongue. Her colorless face and alabaster brow were like the limpid surface of a lake, which by turns is rippled by the impulse of a breeze and recovers its glad serenity when the air is still. More than one young man, a victim to her scorn, accused her of acting a part; but she justified herself by inspiring her detractors with the desire to please her, and then subjecting them to all her most contemptuous caprice. Among the young girls of fashion, not one knew better than she how to assume an air of reserve when a man of talent was introduced to her, or how to display the insulting politeness which treats an equal as an inferior, and to pour out her impertinence on all who tried to hold their heads on a level with hers. Wherever she went she seemed to be accepting homage rather than compliments, and even in a princess her airs and manner would have transformed the chair on which she sat into an imperial throne.

M. de Fontaine discovered too late how utterly the education of the daughter he loved had been ruined by the tender devotion of the whole family. The admiration which the world is at first ready to bestow on a young girl, but for which, sooner or later, it takes its revenge, had added to Émilie's pride, and increased her self-confidence. Universal subservience had developed in her the selfishness natural to spoilt children, who, like kings, make a plaything of everything that comes to hand. As yet the graces of youth and the charms of talent hid these faults from every eye; faults all the more odious in a woman, since she can only please by self-sacrifice and unselfishness; but nothing escapes the eye of a good father, and M. de Fontaine often tried to explain to his daughter the more important pages of the mysterious book of life. Vain effort! He had to lament his daughter's capricious indocility and ironical shrewdness too often to persevere in a task so difficult as that of correcting an ill-disposed nature. He contented himself with giving her from time to time some gentle and kind advice; but he had the sorrow of seeing his tenderest words slide from his daughter's heart as if it were of marble. A father's eyes are slow to be unsealed, and it needed more than one experience

before the old Royalist perceived that his daughter's rare caresses were bestowed on him with an air of condescension. She was like young children, who seem to say to their mother, "Make haste to kiss me, that I may go to play." In short, Émilie vouchsafed to be fond of her parents. But often, by those sudden whims, which seem inexplicable in young girls, she kept aloof and scarcely ever appeared; she complained of having to share her father's and mother's heart with too many people; she was jealous of everyone, even of her brothers and sisters. Then, after creating a desert about her, the strange girl accused all nature of her unreal solitude and her willful griefs. Strong in the experience of her twenty years, she blamed fate, because, not knowing that the mainspring of happiness is in ourselves, she demanded it of the circumstances of life. She would have fled to the ends of the earth to escape a marriage such as those of her two sisters, and nevertheless her heart was full of horrible jealousy at seeing them married, rich, and happy. In short, she sometimes led her mother—who was as much a victim to her vagaries as M. de Fontaine—to suspect that she had a touch of madness.

But such aberrations are quite explicable; nothing is commoner than this unconfessed pride developed in the heart of young girls belonging to families high in the social scale, and gifted by nature with great beauty. They are almost all convinced that their mothers now forty or fifty years of age, can neither sympathize with their young souls, nor conceive of their imaginings. They fancy that most mothers, jealous of their girls, want to dress them in their own way with the premeditated purpose of eclipsing them or robbing them of admiration. Hence, often, secret tears and dumb revolt against supposed tyranny. In the midst of these woes, which become very real though built on an imaginary basis, they have also a mania for composing a scheme of life, while casting for themselves a brilliant horoscope; their magic consists in taking their dreams for reality; secretly, in their long meditations, they resolve to give their heart and hand to none but a man possessing this or the other qualification; and they paint in fancy a model to which, whether or no, the future lover must correspond. After some little experience of life, and the serious reflections that come with years, by dint of seeing the world and its prosaic round, by dint of observing unhappy examples, the brilliant hues of their ideal are extinguished. Then, one fine day, in the course of events, they are quite astonished to find themselves happy without the nuptial poetry of their day-dreams. It was on the strength of that poetry that Mlle. Émilie de Fontaine, in her slender wisdom, had drawn up a programme to which a suitor must conform to be accepted. Hence her disdain and sarcasm.

"Though young and of an ancient family, he must be a peer of France," said she to herself. "I could not bear not to see my coat-of-arms on the panels of my carriage among the folds of azure mantling, not to drive like the princes down the broad walk of the Champs Élysées on the days of Longchamps in Holy Week. Besides, my father says that it will some day be the

highest dignity in France. He must be a soldier—but I reserve the right of making him retire; and he must bear an Order, that the sentries may present arms to us."

And these rare qualifications would count for nothing if this creature of fancy had not a most amiable temper, a fine figure, intelligence, and, above all, if he were not slender. To be lean, a personal grace which is but fugitive, especially under a representative government, was an indispensable condition. Mlle. de Fontaine had an ideal standard which was to be the model. A young man who at the first glance did not fulfill the requisite conditions did not even get a second look.

"Good Heavens! see how fat he is!" was with her the utmost expression of contempt.

To hear her, people of respectable corpulence were incapable of sentiment, bad husbands, and unfit for civilized society. Though it is esteemed a beauty in the East, to be fat seemed to her a misfortune for a woman; but in a man it was a crime. These paradoxical views were amusing, thanks to a certain liveliness of rhetoric. The Count felt nevertheless that by-and-by his daughter's affectations, of which the absurdity would be evident to some women who were not less clear-sighted than merciless, would inevitably become a subject of constant ridicule. He feared lest her eccentric notions should deviate into bad style. He trembled to think that the pitiless world might already be laughing at a young woman who remained so long on the stage without arriving at any conclusion of the drama she was playing. More than one actor in it, disgusted by a refusal, seemed to be waiting for the slightest turn of ill-luck to take his revenge. The indifferent, the lookers-on were beginning to weary of it; admiration is always exhausting to human beings. The old Vendéen knew better than anyone that if there is an art in choosing the right moment for coming forward on the boards of the world, on those of the Court, in a drawing-room or on the stage, it is still more difficult to quit them in the nick of time. So during the first winter after the accession of Charles X., he redoubled his efforts, seconded by his three sons and his sons-in-law, to assemble in the rooms of his official residence the best matches which Paris and the various deputations from departments could offer. The splendor of his entertainments, the luxury of his dining-room, and his dinners, fragrant with truffles, rivaled the famous banquets by which the Ministers of that time secured the vote of their parliamentary recruits.

The Honorable Deputy was consequently pointed at as a most influential corrupter of the legislative honesty of the illustrious Chamber that was dying as it would seem of indigestion. A whimsical result! his efforts to get his daughter married secured him a splendid popularity. He perhaps found some covert advantage in selling his truffles twice over. This accusation, started by certain mocking Liberals, who made up by their flow of words for their small following in the Chamber, was not a success. The Poitevin gentleman had always been so noble and so honorable, that he was not once the object of those epigrams which the malicious journalism

of the day hurled at the three hundred votes of the Center, at the ministers, the cooks, the directors-general, the princely Amphitryons, and the official supporters of the Villèle Ministry.

At the close of this campaign, during which M. de Fontaine had on several occasions brought out all his forces, he believed that this time the procession of suitors would not be a mere dissolving view in his daughter's eyes; that it was time she should make up her mind. He felt a certain inward satisfaction at having well fulfilled his duty as a father. And having left no stone unturned, he hoped that, among so many hearts laid at Émilie's feet, there might be one to which her caprice might give a preference. Incapable of repeating such an effort, and tired, too, of his daughter's conduct, one morning, towards the end of Lent, when the business at the Chamber did not demand his vote, he determined to ask what her views were. While his valet was artistically decorating his bald yellow head with the delta of powder which, with the hanging *ailes de pigeon,* completed his venerable style of hairdressing, Émilie's father, not without some secret misgivings, told his old servant to go and desire the haughty damsel to appear in the presence of the head of the family.

"Joseph," he added, when his hair was dressed, "take away that towel, draw back the curtains, put those chairs square, shake the rug, and lay it quite straight. Dust everything.—Now, air the room a little by opening the window."

The Count multiplied his orders, putting Joseph out of breath, and the old servant, understanding his master's intentions, aired and tidied the room, of course the least cared for of any in the house, and succeded in giving a look of harmony to the files of bills, the letter-boxes, the books and furniture of this sanctum, where the interests of the royal demesnes were debated over. When Joseph had reduced this chaos to some sort of order, and brought to the front such things as might be most pleasing to the eye, as if it were a shop front, or such as by their color might give the effect of a kind of official poetry, he stood for a minute in the midst of the labyrinth of papers piled in some places even on the floor, admired his handiwork, jerked his head, and went.

The anxious sinecure-holder did not share his retainer's favorable opinion. Before seating himself in his deep chair, whose rounded back screened him from draughts, he looked round him doubtfully, examined his dressing-gown with a hostile expression, shook off a few grains of snuff, carefully wiped his nose, arranged the tongs and shovel, made the fire, pulled up the heels of his slippers, pulled out his little cue of hair which had lodged horizontally between the collar of his waistcoat and that of his dressing-gown, restoring it to its perpendicular position; then he swept up the ashes of the hearth, which bore witness to a persistent catarrh. Finally, the old man did not settle himself till he had once more looked all over the room, hoping that nothing could give occasion to the saucy and impertinent remarks with which his daughter was apt to answer his good advice. On this occasion he was anxious not to compromise his dignity as a father. He daintily took a pinch of snuff, cleared

his throat two or three times, as if he were about to demand a count out of the House; then he heard his daughter's light step, and she came in humming an air from *Il Barbiere*.

"Good-morning, papa. What do you want with me so early?" Having sung these words, as though they were the refrain of the melody, she kissed the Count, not with the familiar tenderness which makes a daughter's love so sweet a thing, but with the light carelessness of a mistress confident of pleasing, whatever she may do.

"My dear child," said M. de Fontaine, gravely, "I sent for you to talk to you very seriously about your future pospects. You are at this moment under the necessity of making such a choice of a husband as may secure you durable happiness——"

"My good father," replied Émilie, assuming her most coaxing tone of voice to interrupt him, "it strikes me that the armistice on which we agreed as to my suitors is not yet expired."

"Émilie, we must to-day forbear from jesting on so important a matter. For some time past the efforts of those who most truly love you, my dear child, have been concentrated on the endeavor to settle you suitably; and you would be guilty of ingratitude in meeting with levity those proofs of kindness which I am not alone in lavishing on you."

As she heard these words, after flashing a mischievously inquisitive look at the furniture of her father's study, the young girl brought forward the armchair which looked as if it had been least used by petitioners, set it at the side of the fire-place so as to sit facing her father, and settled herself in so solemn an attitude that it was impossible not to read in it a mocking intention, crossing her arms over the dainty trimmings of a pelerine *à la neige*, and ruthlessly crushing its endless frills of white tulle. After a laughing side glance at her old father's troubled face, she broke silence.

"I never heard you say, my dear father, that the Government issued its instructions in its dressing-gown. However," and she smiled, "that does not matter; the mob are probably not particular. Now, what are your proposals for legislation, and your official introductions?"

"I shall not always be able to make them, headstrong girl!—Listen, Émilie. It is my intention no longer to compromise my reputation, which is part of my children's fortune, by recruiting the regiment of dancers which, spring after spring, you put to rout. You have already been the cause of many dangerous misunderstandings with certain families. I hope to make you perceive more truly the difficulties of your position and of ours. You are two-and-twenty, my dear child, and you ought to have been married nearly three years since. Your brothers and your two sisters are richly and happily provided for. But, my dear, the expenses occasioned by these marriages, and the style of housekeeping you require of your mother, have made such inroads on our income that I can hardly promise you a hundred thousand francs as a marriage portion. From this day forth I shall think only of providing for your mother, who must not be sacrificed to her children. Émilie, if I were to be taken from my family, Mme. de Fontaine could not be left at anybody's mercy, and ought to

enjoy the affluence which I have given her too late as the reward of her devotion in my misfortunes. You see, my child, that the amount of your fortune bears no relation to your notions of grandeur. Even that would be such a sacrifice as I have not hitherto made for either of my children; but they have generously agreed not to expect in the future any compensation for the advantage thus given to a too favored child."

"In their position!" said Émilie, with an ironical toss of her head.

"My dear, do not so depreciate those who love you. Only the poor are generous as a rule; the rich have always excellent reasons for not handing over twenty thousand francs to a relation. Come, my child, do not pout, let us talk rationally.—Among the young marrying men have you noticed M. de Manerville?"

"Oh, he minces his words—he says Zules instead of Jules; he is always looking at his feet, because he thinks them small, and he gazes at himself in the glass! Besides, he is fair. I don't like fair men."

"Well, then, M. de Beaudenord?"

"He is not noble! he is ill made and stout. He is dark, it is true.—If the two gentlemen could agree to combine their fortunes, and the first would give his name and his figure to the second, who should keep his dark hair, then—perhaps——"

"What can you say against M. de Rastignac?"

"M. de Nucingen has made a banker of him," she said with meaning.

"And our cousin, the Vicomte de Portenduère?"

"A mere boy, who dances badly; besides, he has no fortune. And, after all, papa, none of these people have titles. I want, at least, to be a countess like my mother."

"Have you seen no one, then, this winter——?"

"No, papa."

"What then do you want?"

"The son of a peer of France."

"My dear girl, you are mad!" said M. de Fontaine, rising.

But he suddenly lifted his eyes to heaven, and seemed to find a fresh fount of resignation in some religious thought; then, with a look of fatherly pity at his daughter, who herself was moved, he took her hand, pressed it, and said with deep feeling: "God is my witness, poor mistaken child, I have conscientiously discharged my duty to you as a father—conscientiously, do I say? Most lovingly, my Émilie. Yes, God knows! This winter I have brought before you more than one good man, whose character, whose habits, and whose temper were known to me, and all seemed worthy of you. My child, my task is done. From this day forth you are the arbiter of your fate, and I consider myself both happy and unhappy at finding myself relieved of the heaviest of paternal functions. I know not whether you will for any long time, now, hear a voice which, to you, has never been stern; but remember that conjugal happiness does not rest so much on brilliant qualities and ample fortune as on reciprocal esteem. This happiness is, in its nature, modest, and devoid of show. So now, my dear, my consent is given beforehand, whoever the son-in-law may be whom you introduce to me;

but if you should be unhappy, remember you will have no right to accuse your father. I shall not refuse to take proper steps and help you, only your choice must be serious and final. I will never twice compromise the respect due to my white hairs."

The affection thus expressed by her father, the solemn tones of his urgent address, deeply touched Mlle. de Fontaine; but she concealed her emotion, seated herself on her father's knees—for he had dropped all tremulous into his chair again—caressed him fondly, and coaxed him so engagingly that the old man's brow cleared. As soon as Émilie thought that her father had got over his painful agitation, she said in a gentle voice: "I have to thank you for your graceful attention, my dear father. You have had your room set in order to receive your beloved daughter. You did not perhaps know that you would find her so foolish and so headstrong. But, papa, is it so difficult to get married to a peer of France? You declared that they were manufactured by dozens. At least, you will not refuse to advise me."

"No, my poor child, no;—and more than once I may have occasion to cry, 'Beware!' Remember that the making of peers is so recent a force in our government machinery that they have no great fortunes. Those who are rich look to becoming richer. The wealthiest member of our peerage has not half the income of the least rich lord in the English Upper Chamber. Thus all the French peers are on the lookout for great heiresses for their sons, wherever they may meet with them. The necessity in which they find themselves of marrying for money will certainly exist for at least two centuries.

"Pending such a fortunate accident as you long for—and this fastidiousness may cost you the best years of your life—your attractions might work a miracle, for men often marry for love in these days. When experience lurks behind so sweet a face as yours it may achieve wonders. In the first place, have you not the gift of recognizing virtue in the greater or smaller dimensions of a man's body? This is no small matter! To so wise a young person as you are, I need not enlarge on all the difficulties of the enterprise. I am sure that you would never attribute good sense to a stranger because he had a handsome face, or all the virtues because he had a fine figure. And I am quite of your mind in thinking that the sons of peers ought to have an air peculiar to themselves, and perfectly distinctive manners. Though nowadays no external sign stamps a man of rank, those young men will have, perhaps, to you the indefinable something that will reveal it. Then, again, you have your heart well in hand, like a good horseman who is sure his steed cannot bolt. Luck be with you, my dear!"

"You are making game of me, papa. Well, I assure you that I would rather die in Mlle. de Condé's convent than not be the wife of a peer of France."

She slipped out of her father's arms, and, proud of being her own mistress, went off singing the air of *Cara, non dubitare,* in the *Matrimonio Segreto.*

As it happened, the family were that day keeping the anniversary of a family fête. At dessert, Mme. Planat, the Receiver-General's wife, spoke with some

enthusiasm of a young American owning an immense fortune, who had fallen passionately in love with her sister, and made through her the most splendid proposals.

"A banker, I rather think," observed Émilie carelessly. "I do not like money dealers."

"But, Émilie," replied the Baron de Villaine, the husband of the Count's second daughter, "you do not like lawyers either; so that if you refuse men of wealth who have not titles, I do not quite see in what class you are to choose a husband."

"Especially, Émilie, with your standard of slimness," added the Lieutenant-General.

"I know what I want," replied the young lady.

"My sister wants a fine name, a fine young man, fine prospects, and a hundred thousand francs a year," said the Baronne de Fontaine. "M. de Marsay, for instance."

"I know, my dear," retorted Émilie, "that I do not mean to make such a foolish marriage as some I have seen. Moreover, to put an end to these matrimonial discussions, I hereby declare that I shall look on anyone who talks to me of marriage as a foe to my peace of mind."

An uncle of Émilie's, a vice-admiral, whose fortune had just been increased by twenty thousand francs a year in consequence of the Act of Indemnity, and a man of seventy, feeling himself privileged to say hard things to his grandniece, on whom he doted, in order to mollify the bitter tone of the discussion now exclaimed—

"Do not tease my poor little Émilie; don't you see she is waiting till the Duc de Bordeaux comes of age!"

The old man's pleasantry was received with general laughter.

"Take care I don't marry you, old fool!" replied the young girl, whose last words were happily drowned in the noise.

"My dear children," said Mme. de Fontaine, to soften this saucy retort, "Émilie, like you, will take no advice but her mother's."

"Bless me! I shall take no advice but my own in a matter which concerns no one but myself," said Mlle. de Fontaine very distinctly.

At this all eyes were turned to the head of the family. Everyone seemed anxious as to what he would do to assert his dignity. The venerable gentleman enjoyed much consideration, not only in the world; happier than many fathers, he was also appreciated by his family, all its members having a just esteem for the solid qualities by which he had been able to make their fortunes. Hence he was treated with the deep respect which is shown by English families, and some aristocratic houses on the continent, to the living representative of an ancient pedigree. Deep silence had fallen; and the guests looked alternately from the spoiled girl's proud and sulky pout to the severe faces of M. and Mme. de Fontaine.

"I have made my daughter Émilie mistress of her own fate," was the reply spoken by the Count in a deep voice.

Relations and guests gazed at Mlle. de Fontaine with mingled curiosity and pity. The words seemed to declare that fatherly affection was weary of the contest with a character that the whole family knew to be incorrigible. The

sons-in-law muttered, and the brothers glanced at their wives with mocking smiles. From that moment everyone ceased to take any interest in the haughty girl's prospects of marriage. Her old uncle was the only person who, as an old sailor, ventured to stand on her tack, and take her broadsides, without ever troubling himself to return her fire.

When the fine weather was settled, and after the budget was voted, the whole family—a perfect example of the parliamentary families on the northern side of the Channel who have a footing in every government department, and ten votes in the House of Commons—flew away like a brood of young birds to the charming neighborhoods of Aulnay, Antony, and Châtenay. The wealthy Receiver-General had lately purchased in this part of the world a country-house for his wife, who remained in Paris only during the session. Though the fair Émilie despised the commonalty, her feeling was not carried so far as to scorn the advantages of a fortune acquired in a profession; so she accompanied her sister to the sumptuous villa, less out of affection for the members of her family who were visiting there, than because fashion has ordained that every woman who has any self-respect must leave Paris in the summer. The green seclusion of Sceaux answered to perfection the requirements of good style and of the duties of an official position.

As it is extremely doubtful that the fame of the "Bal de Sceaux" should ever have extended beyond the borders of the Department of the Seine, it will be necessary to give some account of this weekly festivity, which at that time was important enough to threaten to become an institution. The environs of the little town of Sceaux enjoy a reputation due to the scenery, which is considered enchanting. Perhaps it is quite ordinary, and owes its fame only to the stupidity of the Paris townsfolk, who, emerging from the stony abyss in which they are buried, would find something to admire in the flats of La Beauce. However, as the poetic shades of Aulnay, the hillsides of Antony, and the valley of the Bièvre are peopled with artists who have traveled far, by foreigners who are very hard to please, and by a great many pretty women not devoid of taste, it is to be supposed that the Parisians are right. But Sceaux possesses another attraction not less powerful to the Parisian. In the midst of a garden whence there are delightful views, stands a large rotunda open on all sides, with a light, spreading roof supported on elegant pillars. This rural baldachino shelters a dancing-floor. The most stuck-up landowners of the neighborhood rarely fail to make an excursion thither once or twice during the season, arriving at this rustic palace of Terpsichore either in dashing parties on horseback, or in the light and elegant carriages which powder the philosophical pedestrian with dust. The hope of meeting some women of fashion, and of being seen by them—and the hope, less often disappointed, of seeing young peasant girls, as wily as judges—crowds the ballroom at Sceaux with numerous swarms of lawyers' clerks, of the disciples of Æsculapius, and other youths whose complexions are kept pale and moist by the damp atmosphere of Paris back-shops. And a good many bourgeois marriages have had their beginning to

the sound of the band occupying the center of this circular ballroom. If that roof could speak, what love-stories could it not tell!

This interesting medley gave the Sceaux balls at that time a spice of more amusement than those of two or three places of the same kind near Paris; and it had incontestable advantages in its rotunda, and the beauty of its situation and its gardens. Émilie was the first to express a wish to play at being *common folk* at this gleeful suburban entertainment, and promised herself immense pleasure in mingling with the crowd. Everybody wondered at her desire to wander through such a mob; but is there not a keen pleasure to grand people in an incognito? Mlle. de Fontaine amused herself with imagining all these town-bred figures; she fancied herself leaving the memory of a bewitching glance and smile stamped on more than one shop-keeper heart, laughed beforehand at the damsels' airs, and sharpened her pencils for the scenes she proposed to sketch in her satirical album. Sunday could not come soon enough to satisfy her impatience.

The party from the Villa Planat set out on foot, so as not to betray the rank of the personages who were about to honor the ball with their presence. They dined early. And the month of May humored their aristocratic escapade by one of its finest evenings. Mlle. de Fontaine was quite surprised to find in the rotunda some quadrilles made up of persons who seemed to belong to the upper classes. Here and there, indeed, were some young men who looked as though they must have saved for a month to shine for a day; and she perceived several couples whose too hearty glee suggested nothing conjugal; still, she could only glean instead of gathering a harvest. She was amazed to see that pleasure in a cotton dress was so very like pleasure robed in satin, and that the girls of the middle class danced quite as well as ladies—nay, sometimes better. Most of the women were simply and suitably dressed. Those who in this assembly represented the ruling power, that is to say, the country-folk, kept apart with wonderful politeness. In fact, Mlle. Émilie had to study the various elements that composed the mixture before she could find any subject for pleasantry. But she had not time to give herself up to malicious criticism, nor opportunity for hearing many of the startling speeches which caricaturists so gladly pick up. The haughty young lady suddenly found a flower in this wide field—the metaphor is reasonable—whose splendor and coloring worked on her imagination with all the fascination of novelty. It often happens that we look at a dress, a hanging, a blank sheet of paper, with so little heed that we do not at first detect a stain or a bright spot which afterwards strikes the eye as though it had come there at the very instant when we see it; and by a sort of moral phenomenon somewhat resembling this, Mlle. de Fontaine discovered in a young man the external perfections of which she had so long dreamed.

Seated on one of the clumsy chairs which marked the boundary line of the circular floor, she had placed herself at the end of the row formed by the family party, so as to be able to stand up or push forward as her fancy moved her, treating the living pictures and groups

in the hall as if she were in a picture gallery; impertinently turning her eyeglasses on persons not two yards away, and making her remarks as though she were criticising or praising a study of a head, a painting of *genre*. Her eyes, after wandering over the vast moving picture, were suddenly caught by this figure, which seemed to have been placed on purpose in one corner of the canvas, and in the best light, like a person out of all proportion with the rest.

The stranger, alone and absorbed in thought, leaned lightly against one of the columns that supported the roof; his arms were folded, and he leaned slightly on one side as though he had placed himself there to have his portrait taken by a painter. His attitude, though full of elegance and dignity, was devoid of affectation. Nothing suggested that he had half turned his head, and bent it a little to the right like Alexander, or Lord Byron, and some other great men, for the sole purpose of attracting attention. His fixed gaze followed a girl who was dancing, and betrayed some strong feeling. His slender, easy frame recalled the noble proportions of the Apollo. Fine black hair curled naturally over a high forehead. At a glance Mlle. de Fontaine observed that his linen was fine, his gloves fresh, and evidently bought of a good maker, and his feet small and well shod in boots of Irish kid. He had none of the vulgar trinkets displayed by the dandies of the National Guard or the Lovelaces of the counting-house. A black ribbon, to which an eyeglass was attached, hung over a waistcoat of the most fashionable cut. Never had the fastidious Émilie seen a man's eyes shaded by such long, curled lashes. Melancholy and passion were expressed in his face, and the complexion was of a manly olive hue. His mouth seemed ready to smile, unbending the corners of eloquent lips; but this, far from hinting at gayety, revealed on the contrary a sort of pathetic grace. There was too much promise in that head, too much distinction in his whole person, to allow of one's saying, "What a handsome man!" or "What a fine man!" One wanted to know him. The most clear-sighted observer, on seeing this stranger, could not have helped taking him for a clever man attracted to this rural festivity by some powerful motive.

All these observations cost Émilie only a minute's attention, during which the privileged gentleman under her severe scrutiny became the object of her secret admiration. She did not say to herself, "He must be a poor peer of France!" but "Oh, if only he is noble, and he surely must be——" Without finishing her thought, she suddenly rose, and followed by her brother the General, she made her way towards the column, affecting to watch the merry quadrilles; but by a stratagem of the eye, familiar to women, she lost not a gesture of the young man as she went towards him. The stranger politely moved to make way for the newcomers, and went to lean against another pillar. Émilie, as much nettled by his politeness as she might have been by an impertinence, began talking to her brother in a louder voice than good taste enjoined; she turned and tossed her head, gesticulated eagerly, and laughed for no particular reason, less to amuse her brother than to attract the attention of the imperturbable stranger. None of her little arts succeeded. Mlle.

de Fontaine then followed the direction in which his eyes were fixed, and discovered the cause of his indifference.

In the midst of the quadrille, close in front of them, a pale girl was dancing; her face was like one of the divinities which Girodet has introduced into his immense composition of *French Warriors Received by Ossian.* Émilie fancied that she recognized her as a distinguished miladi who for some months had been living on a neighboring estate. Her partner was a lad of about fifteen, with red hands, and dressed in nankeen trousers, a blue coat, and white shoes, which showed that the damsel's love of dancing made her easy to please in the matter of partners. Her movements did not betray her apparent delicacy, but a faint flush already tinged her white cheeks, and her complexion was gaining color. Mlle. de Fontaine went nearer, to be able to examine the young lady at the moment when she returned to her place, while the side couples in their turn danced the figure. But the stranger went up to the pretty dancer, and leaning over, said in a gentle but commanding tone—

"Clara, my child, do not dance any more."

Clara made a little pouting face, bent her head, and finally smiled. When the dance was over, the young man wrapped her in a cashmere shawl with a lover's care, and seated her in a place sheltered from the wind. Very soon Mlle. de Fontaine, seeing them rise and walk round the place as if preparing to leave, found means to follow them under the pretense of admiring the views from the garden. Her brother lent himself with malicious good-humor to the divagations of her rather eccentric wanderings. Émilie then saw the attractive couple get into an elegant tilbury, by which stood a mounted groom in livery. At the moment when, from his high seat, the young man was drawing the reins even, she caught a glance from his eye such as a man casts aimlessly at the crowd; then she enjoyed the feeble satisfaction of seeing him twice turn his head to look at her. The young lady did the same. Was it from jealousy?

"I imagine you have now seen enough of the garden," said her brother. "We may go back to the dancing."

"I am ready," said she. "Do you think the girl can be a relation of Lady Dudley's?"

"Lady Dudley may have some male relation staying with her," said the Baron de Fontaine; "but a young girl!—No!"

Next day Mlle. de Fontaine expressed a wish to take a ride. Then she gradually accustomed her old uncle and her brothers to escorting her in very early rides, excellent, she declared, for her health. She had a particular fancy for the environs of the hamlet where Lady Dudley was living. Notwithstanding her cavalry maneuvers, she did not meet the stranger so soon as the eager search she pursued might have allowed her to hope. She went several times to the "Bal de Sceaux" without seeing the young Englishman who had dropped from the skies to pervade and beautify her dreams. Though nothing spurs on a young girl's infant passion so effectually as an obstacle, there was a time when Mlle. de Fontaine was on the point of giving up her strange and secret search, almost despairing of the success of an enterprise whose singularity may give some idea

of the boldness of her temper. In point of fact, she might have wandered long about the village of Châtenay without meeting her Unknown. The fair Clara—since that was the name Émilie had overheard—was not English, and the stranger who escorted her did not dwell among the flowery and fragrant bowers of Châtenay.

One evening Émilie, out riding with her uncle, who, during the fine weather, had gained a fairly long truce from the gout, met Lady Dudley. The distinguished foreigner had with her in her open carriage M. Vandenesse. Émilie recognized the handsome couple, and her suppositions were at once dissipated like a dream. Annoyed, as any woman must be whose expectations are frustrated, she touched up her horse so suddenly that her uncle had the greatest difficulty in following her, she had set off at such a pace.

"I am too old, it would seem, to understand these youthful spirits," said the old sailor to himself as he put his horse to a canter; "or perhaps young people are not what they used to be. But what ails my niece? Now she is walking at a footpace like a gendarme on patrol in the Paris streets. One might fancy she wanted to outflank that worthy man, who looks to me like an author dreaming over his poetry, for he has, I think, a notebook in his hand. My word, I am a great simpleton! Is not that the very young man we are in search of!"

At this idea the old admiral moderated his horse's pace so as to follow his niece without making any noise. He had played too many pranks in the year 1771 and soon after, a time of our history when gallantry was held in honor, not to guess at once that by the merest chance Émilie had met the Unknown of the Sceaux gardens. In spite of the film which age had drawn over his gray eyes, the Comte de Kergarouët could recognize the signs of extreme agitation in his niece, under the unmoved expression she tried to give to her features. The girl's piercing eyes were fixed in a sort of dull amazement on the stranger, who quietly walked on in front of her.

"Aye, that's it," thought the sailor. "She is following him as a pirate follows a merchantman. Then, when she has lost sight of him, she will be in despair at not knowing who it is she is in love with, and whether he is a marquis or a shopkeeper. Really these young heads need an old fogy like me always by their side . . ."

He unexpectedly spurred his horse in such a way as to make his niece's bolt, and rode so hastily between her and the young man on foot that he obliged him to fall back on to the grassy bank which rose from the roadside. Then, abruptly drawing up, the Count exclaimed—

"Couldn't you get out of the way?"

"I beg your pardon, monsieur. But I did not know that it lay with me to apologize to you because you almost rode me down."

"There, enough of that, my good fellow!" replied the sailor harshly, in a sneering tone that was nothing less than insulting. At the same time the Count raised his hunting-crop as if to strike his horse, and touched the young fellow's shoulder, saying, "A liberal citizen is a reasoner; every reasoner should be prudent."

The young man went up the bankside as he heard the sarcasm; then he crossed his arms, and said in an excited tone of voice, "I cannot suppose, monsieur, as I look at your white hairs, that you still amuse yourself by provoking duels——"

"White hairs!" cried the sailor, interrupting him. "You lie in your throat. They are only gray."

A quarrel thus begun had in a few seconds become so fierce that the younger man forgot the moderation he had tried to preserve. Just as the Comte de Kergarouët saw his niece coming back to them with every sign of the greatest uneasiness, he told his antagonist his name, bidding him keep silence before the young lady intrusted to his care. The stranger could not help smiling as he gave a visiting card to the old man, desiring him to observe that he was living in a country-house at Chevreuse; and, after pointing this out to him, he hurried away.

"You very nearly damaged that poor young counter-jumper, my dear," said the Count, advancing hastily to meet Émilie. "Do you not know how to hold your horse in?—And there you leave me to compromise my dignity in order to screen your folly; whereas if you had but stopped, one of your looks, or one of your pretty speeches—one of those you can make so prettily when you are not pert—would have set everything right, even if you had broken his arm."

"But, my dear uncle, it was your horse, not mine, that caused the accident. I really think you can no longer ride; you are not so good a horseman as you were last year.—But instead of talking nonsense——"

"Nonsense, by Gad! Is it nothing to be so impertinent to your uncle?"

"Ought we not to go on and inquire if the young man is hurt? He is limping, uncle, only look!"

"No, he is running; I rated him soundly."

"Oh, yes, uncle; I know you there!"

"Stop," said the Count, pulling Émilie's horse by the bridle, "I do not see the necessity of making advances to some shopkeeper who is only too lucky to have been thrown down by a charming young lady, or the commander of *La Belle-Poule*."

"Why do you think he is anything so common, my dear uncle? He seems to me to have very fine manners."

"Everyone has manners nowadays, my dear."

"No, uncle, not everyone has the air and style which come of the habit of frequenting drawing-rooms, and I am ready to lay a bet with you that the young man is of noble birth."

"You had not long to study him."

"No, but it is not the first time I have seen him."

"Nor is it the first time you have looked for him," replied the admiral with a laugh.

Émilie colored. Her uncle amused himself for some time with her embarrassment; then he said: "Émilie, you know that I love you as my own child, precisely because you are the only member of the family who has the legitimate pride of high birth. Devil take it, child, who could have believed that sound principles would become so rare? Well, I will be your confidant. My dear child, I see that this young gentleman is not indifferent to you. Hush! All

the family would laugh at us if we sailed under the wrong flag. You know what that means. We two will keep our secret, and I promise to bring him straight into the drawing-room."

"When, uncle?"

"To-morrow."

"But, my dear uncle, I am not committed to anything?"

"Nothing whatever, and you may bombard him, set fire to him, and leave him to founder like an old hulk if you choose. He won't be the first, I fancy?"

"You *are* kind, uncle!"

As soon as the Count got home he put on his glasses, quietly took the card out of his pocket, and read, "Maximilien Longueville, Rue du Sentier."

"Make yourself happy, my dear niece," he said to Émilie, "you may hook him with an easy conscience; he belongs to one of our historical families, and if he is not a peer of France, he infallibly will be."

"How do you know so much?"

"That is my secret."

"Then do you know his name?"

The old man bowed his gray head, which was not unlike a gnarled oak-stump, with a few leaves fluttering about it, withered by autumnal frosts; and his niece immediately began to try the ever-new power of her coquettish arts. Long familiar with the secret of cajoling the old man, she lavished on him the most childlike caresses, the tenderest names; she even went so far as to kiss him to induce him to divulge so important a secret. The old man, who spent his life in playing off these scenes on his niece, often paying for them with a present of jewelry, or by giving her his box at the Opera, this time amused himself with her entreaties, and, above all, her caresses. But as he spun out this pleasure too long, Émilie grew angry, passed from coaxing to sarcasm and sulks; then, urged by curiosity, she recovered herself. The diplomatic admiral extracted a solemn promise from his niece that she would for the future be gentler, less noisy, and less willful, that she would spend less, and, above all, tell him everything. The treaty being concluded, and signed by a kiss impressed on Émilie's white brow, he led her into a corner of the room, drew her on to his knee, held the card under his thumbs so as to hide it, and then uncovered the letters one by one, spelling the name Longueville; but he firmly refused to show her anything more.

This incident added to the intensity of Mlle. de Fontaine's secret sentiment, and during chief part of the night she evolved the most brilliant pictures from the dreams with which she had fed her hopes. At last, thanks to chance, to which she had so often appealed, Émilie could now see something very unlike a chimera at the fountain-head of the imaginary wealth with which she gilded her married life. Ignorant, as all young girls are, of the perils of love and marriage, she was passionately captivated by the externals of marriage and love. Is not this as much as to say that her feeling had birth like all the feelings of extreme youth—sweet but cruel mistakes, which exert a fatal influence on the lives of young girls so inexperienced as to trust their own judgment to take care of their future happiness?

Next morning, before Émilie was awake, her uncle had hastened to Chevreuse. On recognizing, in the courtyard

of an elegant little villa, the young man he had so determinedly insulted the day before, he went up to him with the pressing politeness of men of the old Court.

"Why, my dear sir, who could have guessed that I should have a brush, at the age of seventy-three, with the son, or the grandson, of one of my best friends? I am a vice-admiral, monsieur; is not that as much as to say that I think no more of fighting a duel than of smoking a cigar? Why, in my time, no two young men could be intimate till they had seen the color of their blood! But 'sdeath, sir, last evening, sailor-like, I had taken a drop too much grog on board, and I ran you down. Shake hands; I would rather take a hundred rebuffs from a Longueville than cause his family the smallest regret."

However coldly the young man tried to behave to the Comte de Kergarouët, he could not long resist the frank cordiality of his manner, and presently gave him his hand.

"You are going out riding," said the Count. "Do not let me detain you. But, unless you have other plans, I beg you will come to dinner to-day at the Villa Planat. My nephew, the Comte de Fontaine, is a man it is essential that you should know. Ah, ha! And I propose to make up to you for my clumsiness by introducing you to five of the prettiest women in Paris. So, so, young man, your brow is clearing! I am fond of young people, and I like to see them happy. Their happiness reminds me of the good times of my youth, when adventures were not lacking, any more than duels. We were gay dogs then! Nowadays you think and worry over everything, as though there had never been a fifteenth and a sixteenth century."

"But, monsieur, are we not in the right? The sixteenth century only gave religious liberty to Europe, and the nineteenth will give it political lib——"

"Oh, we will not talk politics. I am a perfect old woman—Ultra, you see. But I do not hinder young men from being revolutionary, so long as they leave the King at liberty to disperse their assemblies."

When they had gone a little way, and the Count and his companion were in the heart of the woods, the old sailor pointed out a slender young birch sapling, pulled up his horse, took out one of his pistols, and the bullet was lodged in the heart of the tree, fifteen paces away.

"You see, my dear fellow, that I am not afraid of a duel," he said with comical gravity, as he looked at M. Longueville.

"Nor am I," replied the young man, promptly cocking his pistol; he aimed at the hole made by the Count's bullet, and sent his own in close to it.

"That is what I call a well-educated man," cried the admiral with enthusiasm.

During this ride with the youth, whom he already regarded as his nephew, he found endless opportunities of catechising him on all the trifles of which a perfect knowledge constituted, according to his private code, an accomplished gentleman.

"Have you any debts?" he at last asked of his companion, after many other inquiries.

"No, monsieur."

"What, you pay for all you have?"

"Punctually; otherwise we should lose

our credit, and every sort of respect."

"But at least you have more than one mistress? Ah, you blush, comrade! Well, manners have changed. All these notions of lawful order, Kantism, and liberty have spoiled the young men. You have no Guimard now, no Duthé, no creditors—and you know nothing of heraldry; why, my dear young friend, you are not fully fledged. The man who does not sow his wild oats in the spring sows them in the winter. If I have but eighty thousand francs a year at the age of seventy, it is because I ran through the capital at thirty. Oh! with my wife—in decency and honor. However, your imperfections will not interfere with my introducing you at the Pavillon Planat. Remember you have promised to come, and I shall expect you."

"What an odd little old man!" said Longueville to himself. "He is so jolly and hale; but though he wishes to seem a good fellow, I will not trust him too far."

Next day, at about four o'clock, when the house party were dispersed in the drawing-rooms and billiard-room, a servant announced to the inhabitants of the Villa Planat, "M. *de* Longueville." On hearing the name of the old admiral's protégé, everyone, down to the player who was about to miss his stroke, rushed in, as much to study Mlle. de Fontaine's countenance as to judge of this phœnix of men, who had earned honorable mention to the detriment of so many rivals. A simple but elegant style of dress, an air of perfect ease, polite manners, a pleasant voice with a ring in it which found a response in the hearer's heart-strings won the goodwill of the family for M. Longueville. He did not seem unaccustomed to the luxury of the Receiver-General's ostentatious mansion. Though his conversation was that of a man of the world, it was easy to discern that he had had a brilliant education, and that his knowledge was as thorough as it was extensive. He knew so well the right thing to say in a discussion on naval architecture, trivial, it is true, started by the old admiral, that one of the ladies remarked that he must have passed through the École Polytechnique.

"And I think, madame," he replied, "that I may regard it as an honor to have got in."

In spite of urgent pressing, he refused politely but firmly to be kept to dinner, and put an end to the persistency of the ladies by saying that he was the Hippocrates of his younger sister, whose delicate health required great care.

"Monsieur is perhaps a medical man?" asked one of Émilie's sisters-in-law with ironical meaning.

"Monsieur has left the École Polytechnique," Mlle. de Fontaine kindly put in; her face had flushed with richer color, as she learned that the young lady of the ball was M. Longueville's sister.

"But, my dear, he may be a doctor and yet have been to the École Polytechnique—is it not so, monsieur?"

"There is nothing to prevent it, madame, replied the young man.

Every eye was on Émilie, who was gazing with uneasy curiosity at the fascinating stranger. She breathed more freely when he added, not without a smile, "I have not the honor of belonging to the medical profession; and I even gave up going into the Engineers

in order to preserve my independence."

"And you did well," said the Count. "But how can you regard it as an honor to be a doctor?" added the Breton nobleman. "Ah, my young friend, such a man as you——"

"M. le Comte, I respect every profession that has a useful purpose."

"Well, in that we agree. You respect those professions, I imagine, as a young man respects a dowager."

M. Longueville made his visit neither too long nor too short. He left at the moment when he saw that he had pleased everybody, and that each one's curiosity about him had been roused.

"He is a cunning rascal!" said the Count, coming into the drawing-room after seeing him to the door.

Mlle. de Fontaine, who had been in the secret of this call, had dressed with some care to attract the young man's eye; but she had the little disappointment of finding that he did not bestow on her so much attention as she thought she deserved. The family were a good deal surprised at the silence into which she had retired. Émilie generally displayed all her arts for the benefit of new-comers, her witty prattle, and the inexhaustible eloquence of her eyes and attitudes. Whether it was the young man's pleasing voice and attractive manners had charmed her, that she was seriously in love, and that this feeling had worked a change in her, her demeanor had lost all its affectations. Being simple and natural, she must, no doubt, have seemed more beautiful. Some of her sisters, and an old lady, a friend of the family, saw in this behavior a refinement of art. They supposed that Émilie, judging the man worthy of her, intended to delay revealing her merits, so as to dazzle him suddenly when she found that she pleased him. Every member of the family was curious to know what this capricious creature thought of the stranger; but when, during dinner, everyone chose to endow M. Longueville with some fresh quality which no one else had discovered, Mlle. de Fontaine sat for some time in silence. A sarcastic remark of her uncle's suddenly roused her from her apathy; she said, somewhat epigrammatically, that such heavenly perfection must cover some great defect, and that she would take good care how she judged so gifted a man at first sight.

"Those who please everybody, please nobody," she added; "and the worst of all faults is to have none."

Like all girls who are in love, Émilie cherished the hope of being able to hide her feelings at the bottom of her heart by putting the Argus-eyes that watched on the wrong tack; but by the end of a fornight there was not a member of the large family party who was not in this little domestic secret. When M. Longueville called for the third time, Émilie believed it was chiefly for her sake. This discovery gave her such intoxicating pleasure that she was startled as she reflected on it. There was something in it very painful to her pride. Accustomed as she was to be the center of her world, she was obliged to recognize a force that attracted her outside herself; she tried to resist, but she could not chase from her heart the fascinating image of the young man.

Then came some anxiety. Two of M. Longueville's qualities, very adverse to general curiosity, and especially to Mlle.

de Fontaine's, were unexpected modesty and discretion. He never spoke of himself, of his pursuits, or of his family. The hints Émilie threw out in conversation, and the traps she laid to extract from the young fellow some facts concerning himself, he could evade with the adroitness of a diplomatist concealing a secret. If she talked of painting, he responded as a connoisseur; if she sat down to play, he showed without conceit that he was a very good pianist; one evening he delighted all the party by joining his delightful voice to Émilie's in one of Cimarosa's charming duets. But when they tried to find out whether he were a professional singer, he baffled them so pleasantly that he did not afford these women, practiced as they were in the art of reading feelings, the least chance of discovering to what social sphere he belonged. However boldly the old uncle cast the boarding-hooks over the vessel, Longueville slipped away cleverly, so as to preserve the charm of mystery; and it was easy to him to remain the "handsome Stranger" at the Villa, because curiosity never overstepped the bounds of good breeding.

Émilie, distracted by this reserve, hoped to get more out of the sister than the brother, in the form of confidences. Aided by her uncle, who was as skillful in such maneuvers as in handling a ship, she endeavored to bring upon the scene the hitherto unseen figure of Mlle. Clara Longueville. The family party at the Villa Planat soon expressed the greatest desire to make the acquaintance of so amiable a lady, and to give her some amusement. An informal dance was proposed and accepted. The ladies did not despair of making a young girl of sixteen talk.

Notwithstanding the little clouds piled up by suspicion and created by curiosity, a light of joy shone in Émilie's soul, for she found life delicious when thus intimately connected with another than herself. She began to understand the relations of life. Whether it is that happiness makes us better, or that she was too fully occupied to torment other people, she became less caustic, more gentle, and indulgent. This change in her temper enchanted and amazed her family. Perhaps, at last, her selfishness was being transformed to love. It was a deep delight to her to look for the arrival of her bashful and unconfessed adorer. Though they had not uttered a word of passion, she knew that she was loved, and with what art did she not lead the stranger to unlock the stores of his information, which proved to be varied! She perceived that she, too, was being studied, and that made her endeavor to remedy the defects her education had encouraged. Was not this her first homage to love, and a bitter reproach to herself? She desired to please, and she was enchanting; she loved, and she was idolized. Her family, knowing that her pride would sufficiently protect her, gave her enough freedom to enjoy the little childish delights which gave to first love its charm and its violence. More than once the young man and Mlle. de Fontaine walked, téte-à-téte, in the avenues of the garden, where nature was dressed like a woman going to a ball. More than once they had those conversations, aimless and meaningless, in which the emptiest phrases are those which cover the deep-

est feelings. They often admired together the setting sun and its gorgeous coloring. They gathered daisies to pull the petals off, and sang the most impassioned duets, using the notes set down by Pergolesi or Rossini as faithful interpreters to express their secrets.

The day of the dance came. Clara Longueville and her brother, whom the servants persisted in honoring with the noble *de,* were the principal guests. For the first time in her life Mlle. de Fontaine felt pleasure in a young girl's triumph. She lavished on Clara in all sincerity the gracious petting and little attentions which women generally give each other only to excite the jealousy of men. Émilie had, indeed, an object in view; she wanted to discover some secrets. But, being a girl, Mlle. Longueville showed even more mother-wit than her brother, for she did not even look as if she were hiding a secret, and kept the conversation to subjects unconnected with personal interests, while, at the same time, she gave it so much charm that Mlle. de Fontaine was almost envious, and called her "the Siren." Though Émilie had intended to make Clara talk, it was Clara, in fact, who questioned Émilie; she had meant to judge her, and she was judged by her; she was constantly provoked to find that she had betrayed her own character in some reply which Clara had extracted from her, while her modest and candid manner prohibited any suspicion of perfidy. There was a moment when Mlle. de Fontaine seemed sorry for an ill-judged sally against the commonalty to which Clara had led her.

"Mademoiselle," said the sweet child, "I have heard so much of you from Maximilien that I had the keenest desire to know you, out of affection for him; but is not a wish to know you a wish to love you?"

"My dear Clara, I feared I might have displeased you by speaking thus of people who are not of noble birth."

"Oh, be quite easy. That sort of discussion is pointless in these days. As for me, it does not affect me. I am beside the question."

Ambitious as the answer might seem, it filled Mlle. de Fontaine with the deepest joy; for, like all infatuated people, she explained it, as oracles are explained, in the sense that harmonized with her wishes; she began dancing again in higher spirits than ever, as she watched Longueville, whose figure and grace almost surpassed those of her imaginary ideal. She felt added satisfaction in believing him to be well born, her black eyes sparkled, and she danced with all the pleasure that comes of dancing in the presence of the being we love. The couple had never understood each other so well as at this moment; more than once they felt the finger tips thrill and tremble as they were married in the figures of the dance.

The early autumn had come to the handsome pair, in the midst of country festivities and pleasures; they had abandoned themselves softly to the tide of the sweetest sentiment in life, strengthening it by a thousand little incidents which anyone can imagine; for love is in some respects always the same. They studied each other through it all, as much as lovers can.

"Well, well; a flirtation never turned so quickly into a love match," said the old uncle, who kept an eye on the two

young people as a naturalist watches an insect in the microscope.

This speech alarmed M. and Mme. Fontaine. The old Vendéen had ceased to be so indifferent to his daughter's prospects as he had promised to be. He went to Paris to seek information, and found none. Uneasy at this mystery, and not yet knowing what might be the outcome of the inquiry which he had begged a Paris friend to institute with reference to the family of Longueville, he thought it his duty to warn his daughter to behave prudently. The fatherly admonition was received with mock submission spiced with irony.

"At least, my dear Émilie, if you love him, do not own it to him."

"My dear father, I certainly do love him; but I will wait your permission before I tell him so."

"But remember, Émilie, you know nothing of his family or his pursuits."

"I may be ignorant, but I am content to be. But, father, you wished to see me married; you left me at liberty to make my choice; my choice is irrevocably made—what more is needful?"

"It is needful to ascertain, my dear, whether the man of your choice is the son of a peer of France," the venerable gentleman retorted sarcastically.

Émilie was silent for a moment. She presently raised her head, looked at her father, and said somewhat anxiously, "Are not the Longuevilles——?"

"They became extinct in the person of the old Duc de Rostein-Limbourg, who perished on the scaffold in 1793. He was the last representative of the last and younger branch."

"But, papa, there are some very good families descended from bastards. The history of France swarms with princes bearing the bar sinister on their shields."

"Your ideas are much changed," said the old man, with a smile.

The following day was the last that the Fontaine family were to spend at the Pavillon Planat. Émilie, greatly disturbed by her father's warning, awaited with extreme impatience the hour at which young Longueville was in the habit of coming, to wring some explanation from him. She went out after dinner, and walked alone across the shrubbery towards an arbor fit for lovers, where she knew that the eager youth would seek her; and as she hastened thither she considered of the best way to discover so important a matter without compromising herself—a rather difficult thing! Hitherto no direct avowal had sanctioned the feelings which bound her to this stranger. Like Maximilien, she had secretly enjoyed the sweetness of first love; but both were equally proud, and each feared to confess that love.

Maximilien Longueville, to whom Clara had communicated her not unfounded suspicions as to Émilie's character, was by turns carried away by the violence of a young man's passion, and held back by a wish to know and test the woman to whom he would be entrusting his happiness. His love had not hindered him from perceiving in Émilie the prejudice which marred her young nature; but before attempting to counteract them, he wished to be sure that she loved him, for he would no sooner risk the fate of his love than of his life. He had, therefore, persistently kept a silence to which his looks,

his behavior, and his smallest actions gave the lie.

On her side the self-respect natural to a young girl, augmented in Mlle. de Fontaine by the monstrous vanity founded on her birth and beauty, kept her from meeting the declaration half-way, which her growing passion sometimes urged her to invite. Thus the lovers had instinctively understood the situation without explaining to each other their secret motives. There are times in life when such vagueness pleases youthful minds. Just because each had postponed speaking too long, they seemed to be playing a cruel game of suspense. He was trying to discover whether he was beloved, by the effort any confession would cost his haughty mistress; she every minute hoped that he would break a too respectful silence.

Émilie, seated on a rustic bench, was reflecting on all that had happened in these three months full of enchantment. Her father's suspicions were the last that could appeal to her; she even disposed of them at once by two or three of those reflections natural to an inexperienced girl, which, to her, seemed conclusive. Above all, she was convinced that it was impossible that she should deceive herself. All the summer through she had not been able to detect in Maximilien a single gesture, or a single word, which could indicate a vulgar origin or vulgar occupations; nay more, his manner of discussing things revealed a man devoted to the highest interests of the nation. "Besides," she reflected, "an office clerk, a banker, or a merchant, would not be at leisure to spend a whole season in paying his addresses to me in the midst of woods and fields; wasting his time as freely as a nobleman who has life before him free of all care."

She had given herself up to meditations far more interesting to her than these preliminary thoughts, when a slight rustling in the leaves announced to her that Maximilien had been watching her for a minute, not probably without admiration.

"Do you know that it is very wrong to take a young girl thus unawares?" she asked him, smiling.

"Especially when they are busy with their secrets," replied Maximilien archly.

"Why should I not have my secrets? You certainly have yours."

"Then you really were thinking of your secrets?" he went on, laughing.

"No, I was thinking of yours. My own, I know."

"But perhaps my secrets are yours and yours mine," cried the young man softly seizing Mlle. de Fontaine's hand and drawing it through his arm.

After walking a few steps they found themselves under a clump of trees which the hues of the sinking sun wrapped in a haze of red and brown. This touch of natural magic lent a certain solemnity to the moment. The young man's free and eager action, and, above all, the throbbing of his surging heart, whose hurried beating spoke to Émilie's arm, stirred her to an emotion that was all the more disturbing because it was produced by the simplest and most innocent circumstances. The restraint under which young girls of the upper class live gives incredible force to any explosion of feeling, and to meet an impassioned lover is one of the greatest dangers they can encounter. Never had

Émilie and Maximilien allowed their eyes to say so much that they dared never speak. Carried away by this intoxication, they easily forgot the petty stipulations of pride, and the cold hesitancies of suspicion. At first, indeed, they could only express themselves by a pressure of hands which interpreted their happy thoughts.

After slowly pacing a few steps in long silence, Mlle. de Fontaine spoke. "Monsieur, I have a question to ask you." she said, trembling, and in an agitated voice. "But, remember, I beg, that it is in a manner compulsory on me, from the rather singular position I am in with regard to my family."

A pause, terrible to Émilie, followed these sentences, which she had almost stammered out. During the minute while it lasted, the girl, haughty as she was, dared not meet the flashing eye of the man she loved, for she was secretly conscious of the meanness of the next words she added: "Are you of noble birth?"

As soon as the words were spoken she wished herself at the bottom of a lake.

"Mademoiselle," Longueville gravely replied, and his face assumed a sort of stern dignity, "I promise to answer you truly as soon as you shall have answered in all sincerity a question I will put to you!"—He released her arm, and the girl suddenly felt alone in the world, as he said: "What is your object in questioning me as to my birth?"

She stood motionless, cold, and speechless.

"Mademoiselle," Maximilien went on, "let us go no further if we do not understand each other. I love you," he said, in a voice of deep emotion. "Well, then," he added, as he heard the joyful exclamation she could not suppress, "why ask me if I am of noble birth?"

"Could he speak so if he were not?" cried a voice within her, which Émilie believed came from the depths of her heart. She gracefully raised her head, seemed to find new life in the young man's gaze, and held out her hand as if to renew the alliance.

"You thought I cared very much for dignities?" said she with keen archness.

"I have no titles to offer my wife," he replied, in a half-sportive, half-serious tone. "But if I choose one of high rank, and among women whom a wealthy home has accustomed to the luxury and pleasures of a fine fortune, I know what such a choice requires of me. Love gives everything," he added lightly, "but only to lovers. Once married, they need something more than the vault of heaven and the carpet of a meadow."

"He is rich," she reflected. "As to titles, perhaps he only wants to try me. He has been told that I am mad about titles, and bent on marrying none but a peer's son. My priggish sisters have played me that trick."—"I assure you, monsieur," she said aloud, "that I have had very extravagant ideas about life and the world; but now," she added pointedly, "I know where true riches are to be found for a wife."

"I must believe that you are speaking from the depths of your heart," he said, with gentle gravity. "But this winter, my dear Émilie, in less than two months perhaps, I may be proud of what I shall have to offer you if you care for the pleasures of wealth. This is the only secret I shall keep locked here," and he laid his hand on his heart, "for

on its success my happiness depends. I dare not say ours."

"Yes, yes, ours!"

Exchanging such sweet nothings, they slowly made their way back to rejoin the company. Mlle. de Fontaine had never found her lover more amiable or wittier; his light figure, his engaging manners, seemed to her more charming than ever, since the conversation which had made her to some extent the possessor of a heart worthy to be the envy of every woman. They sang an Italian duet with so much expression that the audience applauded enthusiastically. Their adieux were in a conventional tone, which concealed their happiness. In short, this day had been to Émilie like a chain binding her more closely than ever to the Stranger's fate. The strength and dignity he had displayed in the scene when they had confessed their feelings had perhaps impressed Mlle. de Fontaine with the respect without which there is no true love.

When she was left alone in the drawing-room with her father, the old man went up to her affectionately, held her hands, and asked her whether she had gained any light as to M. Longueville's family and fortune.

"Yes, my dear father," she replied, "and I am happier than I could have hoped. In short, M. de Longueville is the only man I could ever marry."

"Very well, Émilie," said the Count, "then I know what remains for me to do."

"Do you know of any impediment?" she asked, in sincere alarm.

"My dear child, the young man is totally unknown to me; but unless he is not a man of honor, so long as you love him, he is as dear to me as a son."

"Not a man of honor!" exclaimed Émilie. "As to that, I am quite easy. My uncle, who introduced him to us, will answer for him. Say, my dear uncle, has he been a filibuster, an outlaw, a pirate?"

"I knew I should find myself in this fix!" cried the old sailor, waking up. He looked round the room, but his niece had vanished "like Saint-Elmo's fires," to use his favorite expression.

"Well, uncle," M. de Fontaine went on, "how could you hide from us all you knew about this young man? You must have seen how anxious we have been. Is M. de Longueville a man of family?"

"I don't know him from Adam or Eve," said the Comte de Kergarouët. "Trusting to that crazy child's tact, I got him here by a method of my own. I know that the boy shoots with a pistol to admiration, hunts well, plays wonderfully at billiards, at chess, and at backgammon; he handles the foils, and rides a horse like the late Chevalier de Saint-Georges. He has a thorough knowledge of all our vintages. He is as good an arithmetician as Barême, draws, dances, and sings well. The devil's in it! what more do you want? If that is not a perfect gentleman, find me a bourgeois who knows all this, or any man who lives more nobly than he does. Does he do anything, I ask you? Does he compromise his dignity by hanging about an office, bowing down before the upstarts you call Directors-General? He walks upright. He is a man.—However, I have just found in my waistcoat pocket the card he gave when he fancied I wanted to cut his throat, poor innocent. Young men are very simple-minded nowadays! Here it is."

"Rue du Sentier, No. 5," said M. de Fontaine, trying to recall among all the information he had received something which might concern the stranger. "What the devil can it mean? Messrs. Palma, Werbrust & Co., wholesale dealers in muslins, calicoes, and printed cotton goods, live there.—Stay, I have it: Longueville the deputy has an interest in their house. Well, but so far as I know, Longueville has but one son of two-and-thirty, who is not at all like our man, and to whom he gave fifty thousand francs a year that he might marry a minister's daughter; he wants to be made a peer like the rest of 'em. —I never heard him mention this Maximilien. Has he a daughter? What is this girl Clara? Besides, it is open to any adventurer to call himself Longueville. But is not the house of Palma, Werbrust & Co. half ruined by some speculation in Mexico or the Indies? I will clear all this up."

"You speak a soliloquy as if you were on the stage, and seem to account me a cypher," said the old admiral suddenly. "Don't you know that if he is a gentleman, I have more than one bag in my hold that will stop any leak in his fortune?"

"As to that, if he is a son of Longueville's, he will want nothing; but," said M. de Fontaine, shaking his head from side to side, "his father has not even washed off the stains of his origin. Before the Revolution he was an attorney, and the *de* he has since assumed no more belongs to him than half of his fortune."

"Pooh! pooh! happy those whose fathers were hanged!" cried the admiral gayly.

Three or four days after this memorable day, on one of those fine mornings in the month of November, which show the boulevards cleaned by the sharp cold of an early frost, Mlle. de Fontaine, wrapped in a new style of fur cape, of which she wished to set the fashion, went out with two of her sisters-in-law, on whom she had been wont to discharge her most cutting remarks. The three women were tempted to the drive, less by their desire to try a very elegant carriage, and wear gowns which were to set the fashions for the winter, than by their wish to see a cape which a friend had observed in a handsome lace and linen shop at the corner of the Rue de la Paix. As soon as they were in the shop the Baronne de Fontaine pulled Émilie by the sleeve, and pointed out to her Maximilien Longueville seated behind the desk, and engaged in paying out the change for a gold piece to one of the work-women with whom he seemed to be in consultation. The "handsome stranger" held in his hand a parcel of patterns, which left no doubt as to his honorable profession.

Émilie felt an icy shudder, though no one perceived it. Thanks to the good breeding of the best society, she completely concealed the rage in her heart, and answered her sister-in-law with the words, "I knew it," with a fulness of intonation and inimitable decision which the most famous actress of the time might have envied. She went straight up to the desk. Longueville looked up, put the patterns in his pocket with distracting coolness, bowed to Mlle. de Fontaine, and came forward, looking at her keenly.

"Mademoiselle," he said to the shop

girl, who followed him, looking very much disturbed, "I will send to settle that account; my house deals in that way. But here," he whispered into her ear, as he gave her a thousand-franc note, "take this—it is between ourselves. —You will forgive me, I trust, mademoiselle," he added, turning to Émilie. "You will kindly excuse the tyranny of business matters."

"Indeed, monsieur, it seems to me that it is no concern of mine," replied Mlle. de Fontaine, looking at him with a bold expression of sarcastic indifference which might have made anyone believe that she now saw him for the first time.

"Do you really mean it?" asked Maximilien in a broken voice.

Émilie turned her back upon him with amazing insolence. These few words, spoken in an undertone, had escaped the ears of her two sisters-in-law. When, after buying the cape, the three ladies got into the carriage again, Émilie, seated with her back to the horses, could not resist one last comprehensive glance into the depths of the odious shop, where she saw Maximilien standing with his arms folded, in the attitude of a man superior to the disaster that had so suddenly fallen on him. Their eyes met and flashed implacable looks. Each hoped to inflict a cruel wound on the heart of a lover. In one instant they were as far apart as if one had been in China and the other in Greenland.

Does not the breath of vanity wither everything? Mlle. de Fontaine, a prey to the most violent struggle that can torture the heart of a young girl, reaped the richest harvest of anguish that prejudice and narrow-mindedness ever sowed in a human soul. Her face, but just now fresh and velvety, was streaked with yellow lines and red patches; the paleness of her cheeks seemed every now and then to turn green. Hoping to hide her despair from her sisters, she would laugh as she pointed out some ridiculous dress or passer-by; but her laughter was spasmodic. She was more deeply hurt by their unspoken compassion than by any satirical comments for which she might have revenged herself. She exhausted her wit in trying to engage them in a conversation, in which she tried to expend her fury in senseless paradoxes, heaping on all men engaged in trade the bitterest insults and witticisms in the worst taste.

On getting home, she had an attack of fever, which at first assumed a somewhat serious character. By the end of a month the care of her parents and of the physician restored her to her family.

Everyone hoped that this lesson would be severe enough to subdue Émilie's nature; but she insensibly fell into her old habits and threw herself again into the world of fashion. She declared that there was no disgrace in making a mistake. If she, like her father, had a vote in the Chamber, she would move for an edict, she said, by which all merchants, and especially dealers in calico, should be branded on the forehead, like Berri sheep, down to the third generation. She wished that none but nobles should have a right to wear the antique French costume, which was so becoming to the courtiers of Louis XV. To hear her, it was a misfortune for France, perhaps, that there was no outward and visible difference between a merchant and a peer of France. And a hundred more such pleasantries, easy to imagine, were

rapidly poured out when any accident brought up the subject.

But those who loved Émilie could see through all her banter a tinge of melancholy. It was clear that Maximilien Longueville still reigned over that inexorable heart. Sometimes she would be as gentle as she had been during the brief summer that had seen the birth of her love; sometimes, again, she was unendurable. Everyone made excuses for her inequality of temper, which had its source in sufferings at once secret and known to all. The Comte de Kergarouët had some influence over her thanks to his increased prodigality, a kind of consolation which rarely fails of its effect on a Parisian girl.

The first ball at which Mlle. de Fontaine appeared was at the Neapolitan ambassador's. As she took her place in the first quadrille she saw, a few yards away from her, Maximilien Longueville, who nodded slightly to her partner.

"Is that young man a friend of yours?" she asked, with a scornful air.

"Only my brother," he replied.

Émilie could not help starting. "Ah!" he continued, "and he is the noblest soul living——"

"Do you know my name?" asked Émilie, eagerly interrupting him.

"No, mademoiselle. It is a crime, I confess, not to remember a name which is on every lip—I ought to say in every heart. But I have a valid excuse. I have but just arrived from Germany. My ambassador, who is in Paris on leave, sent me here this evening to take care of his amiable wife, whom you may see yonder in that corner."

"A perfect tragic mask!" said Émilie, after looking at the ambassadress.

"And yet that is her ballroom face!" said the young man, laughing. "I shall have to dance with her! So I thought I might have some compensation." Mlle. de Fontaine courtesied. "I was very much surprised," the voluble young secretary went on, "to find my brother here. On arriving from Vienna I heard that the poor boy was ill in bed, and I counted on seeing him before coming to this ball; but good policy will not always allow us to indulge family affection. The *Padrona della casa* would not give me time to call on my poor Maximilien."

"Then, monsieur, your brother is not, like you, in diplomatic employment."

"No," said the attaché, with a sigh, "the poor fellow sacrificed himself for me. He and my sister Clara have renounced their share of my father's fortune to make an eldest son of me. My father dreams of a peerage, like all who vote for the ministry. Indeed, it is promised him," he added in an undertone. "After saving up a little capital my brother joined a banking firm, and I hear he has just effected a speculation in Brazil which may make him a millionaire. You see me in the highest spirits at having been able, by my diplomatic connections, to contribute to his success. I am impatiently expecting a dispatch from the Brazilian Legation, which will help to lift the cloud from his brow. What do you think of him?"

"Well, your brother's face does not look to me like that of a man busied with money matters."

The young attaché shot a scrutinizing glance at the apparently calm face of his partner.

"What!" he exclaimed, with a smile,

"can young ladies read the thoughts of love behind a silent brow?"

"Your brother is in love, then?" she asked, betrayed into a movement of curiosity.

"Yes; my sister Clara, to whom he is as devoted as a mother, wrote to me that he had fallen in love this summer with a very pretty girl; but I have had no further news of the affair. Would you believe that the poor boy used to get up at five in the morning, and went off to settle his business that he might be back by four o'clock in the country where the lady was? In fact, he ruined a very nice thoroughbred that I had given him. Forgive my chatter, mademoiselle; I have but just come home from Germany. For a year I have heard no decent French, I have been weaned from French faces, and satiated with Germans, to such a degree that, I believe, in my patriotic mania, I could talk to the chimeras on a French candlestick. And if I talk with a lack of reserve unbecoming in a diplomatist, the fault is yours, mademoiselle. Was it not you who pointed out my brother? When he is the theme I become inexhaustible. I should like to proclaim to all the world how good and generous he is. He gave up no less than a hundred thousand francs a year, the income from the Longueville property."

If Mlle. de Fontaine had the benefit of these important revelations, it was partly due to the skill with which she continued to question her confiding partner from the moment when she found that he was the brother of her scorned lover.

"And could you, without being grieved, see your brother selling muslin and calico?" asked Émilie, at the end of the third figure of the quadrille.

"How do you know that?" asked the attaché. "Thank God, though I pour out a flood of words, I have already acquired the art of not telling more than I intend, like all the other diplomatic apprentices I know."

"You told me, I assure you."

M. de Longueville looked at Mlle. de Fontaine with a surprise that was full of perspicacity. A suspicion flashed upon him. He glanced inquiringly from his brother to his partner, guessed everything, clasped his hands, fixed his eyes on the ceiling, and began to laugh, saying, "I am an idiot! You are the handsomest person here; my brother keeps stealing glances at you; he is dancing in spite of his illness, and you pretend not to see him. Make him happy," he added as he led her back to her old uncle. "I shall not be jealous, but I shall always shiver a little at calling you my sister——"

The lovers, nowever, were to prove as inexorable to each other as they were to themselves. At about two in the morning, refreshments were served in an immense corridor, where, to leave persons of the same coterie free to meet each other, the tables were arranged as in a restaurant. By one of those accidents which always happens to lovers, Mlle. de Fontaine found herself at a table next to that at which the more important guests were seated. Maximilien was one of the group. Émilie, who lent an attentive ear to her neighbors' conversation, overheard one of those dialogues into which a young woman so easily falls with a young man who has the grace and style of Maximilien Longue-

ville. The lady talking to the young banker was a Neapolitan Duchess, whose eyes shot lightning flashes, and whose skin had the sheen of satin. The intimate terms on which Longueville affected to be with her stung Mlle. de Fontaine all the more because she had just given her lover back twenty times as much tenderness as she had ever felt for him before.

"Yes, monsieur, in my country true love can make every kind of sacrifice," the Duchess was saying, with a simper.

"You have more passion than Frenchwomen," said Maximilien, whose burning gaze fell on Émilie. "They are all vanity."

"Monsieur," Émilie eagerly interposed, "is it not very wrong to calumniate your own country? Devotion is to be found in every nation."

"Do you imagine, mademoiselle," retorted the Italian, with a sardonic smile, "that a Parisian would be capable of following her lover all over the world?"

"Oh, madame, let us understand each other. She would follow him to a desert and live in a tent, but not to sit in a shop."

A disdainful gesture completed her meaning. Thus, under the influence of her disastrous education, Émilie for the second time killed her budding happiness, and destroyed its prospects of life. Maximilien's apparent indifference, and a woman's smile, had wrung from her one of those sarcasms whose treacherous zest always led her astray.

"Mademoiselle," said Longueville in a low voice, under cover of the noise made by the ladies as they rose from the table, "no one will ever more ardently desire your happiness than I; permit me to assure you of this, as I am taking leave of you. I am starting for Italy in a few days."

"With a Duchess, no doubt?"

"No, but perhaps with a mortal blow."

"Is not that pure fancy?" asked Émilie, with an anxious glance.

"No," he replied. "There are wounds which never heal."

"You are not to go," said the girl imperiously, and she smiled.

"I shall go," replied Maximilien, gravely.

"You will find me married on your return, I warn you," she said coquettishly.

"I hope so."

"Impertinent wretch!" she exclaimed. "How cruel a revenge!"

A fortnight later Maximilien set out with his sister Clara for the warm and poetic scenes of beautiful Italy, leaving Mlle. de Fontaine a prey to the most vehement regret. The young Secretary to the Embassy took up his brother's quarrel, and contrived to take signal vengeance on Émilie's disdain by making known the occasion of the lovers' separation. He repaid his fair partner with interest all the sarcasm with which she had formerly attacked Maximilien, and often made more than one Excellency smile by describing the fair foe of the counting-house, the amazon who preached a crusade against bankers, the young girl whose love had evaporated before a bale of muslin. The Comte de Fontaine was obliged to use his influence to procure an appointment to Russia for Auguste Longueville in order to protect his daughter from the ridicule heaped upon her by this dangerous young prosecutor.

Not long after, the Ministry being

compelled to raise a levy of peers to support the aristocratic party, trembling in the Upper Chamber under the lash of an illustrious writer, gave M. Guiraudin de Longueville a peerage, with the title of Viscount. M. de Fontaine also obtained a peerage, the reward due as much to his fidelity in evil days as to his name, which claimed a place in the hereditary Chamber.

About this time Émilie, now of age, made, no doubt, some serious reflections on life, for her tone and manners changed perceptibly. Instead of amusing herself by saying spiteful things to her uncle, she lavished on him the most affectionate attentions; she brought him his stick with a persevering devotion that made the cynical smile, she gave him her arm, rode in his carriage, and accompanied him in all his drives; she even persuaded him that she liked the smell of tobacco, and read him his favorite paper *La Quotidienne* in the midst of the clouds of smoke, which the malicious old sailor intentionally blew over her; she learned piquet to be a match for the old Count; and this fantastic damsel even listened without impatience to his periodical narratives of the battles of the *Belle-Poule*, the maneuvers of the *Ville de Paris*, M. de Suffren's first expedition, or the battle of Aboukir.

Though the old sailor had often said that he knew his longitude and latitude too well to allow himself to be captured by a young corvette, one fine morning Paris drawing-rooms heard the news of the marriage of Mlle. de Fontaine to the Comte de Kergarouët. The young Countess gave splendid entertainments to drown thought; but she, no doubt, found a void at the bottom of the whirlpool; luxury was ineffectual to disguise the emptiness and grief of her sorrowing soul; for the most part, in spite of the flashes of assumed gayety, her beautiful face expressed unspoken melancholy. Émilie appeared, however, full of attentions and consideration for her old husband, who, on retiring to his rooms at night, to the sounds of a lively band, would often say, "I do not know myself. Was I to wait till the age of seventy-two to embark as pilot on board the *Belle-Émilie* after twenty years of matrimonial galleys?"

The conduct of the young Countess was marked by such strictness that the most clear-sighted criticism had no fault to find with her. Lookers-on chose to think that the vice-admiral had reserved the right of disposing of his fortune to keep his wife more tightly in hand; but this was a notion as insulting to the uncle as to the niece. Their conduct was indeed so delicately judicious that the men who were most interested in guessing the secrets of the couple could never decide whether the old Count regarded her as a wife or as a daughter. He was often heard to say that he had rescued his niece as a castaway after shipwreck; and that, for his part, he had never taken a mean advantage of hospitality when he had saved an enemy from the fury of the storm. Though the Countess aspired to reign in Paris and tried to keep pace with Mmes. the Duchesses de Maufrigneuse and de Chaulieu, the Marquises d'Espard and d'Aiglemont, the Countesses Féraud, de Montcornet, and de Restaud, Mme. de Camps, and Mlle. des Touches, she did not yield to the addresses of the young

Vicomte de Portenduère, who made her his idol.

Two years after her marriage, in one of the old drawing-rooms in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where she was admired for her character, worthy of the old school, Emilie hear the Vicomte de Longueville announced. In the corner of the room where she was sitting, playing piquet with the Bishop of Persepolis, her agitation was not observed; she turned her head and saw her former lover come in, in all the freshness of youth. His father's death, and then that of his brother, killed by the severe climate of Saint-Petersburg, had placed on Maximilien's head the hereditary plumes of the French peer's hat. His fortune matched his learning and his merits; only the day before his youthful and fervid eloquence had dazzled the Assembly. At this moment he stood before the Countess, free, and graced with all the advantages she had formerly required of her ideal. Every mother with a daughter to marry made amiable advances to a man gifted with the virtues which they attributed to him, as they admired his attractive person; but Émilie knew, better than anyone, that the Vicomte de Longueville had the steadfast nature in which a wise woman sees a guarantee of happiness. She looked at the admiral who, to use his favorite expression, seemed likely to hold his courses for a long time yet, and cursed the follies of her youth.

At this moment M. de Persepolis said with Episcopal grace: "Fair lady, you have thrown away the king of hearts—I have won. But do not regret your money. I keep it for my little seminaries."

Gobseck

To M. le Baron Barchou de Penhoen

Among all the pupils of the Oratorian school at Vendôme, we are, I think, the only two who have afterwards met in mid-career of a life of letters—we who once were cultivating Philosophy when by rights we should have been minding our De viris. *When we met, you were engaged upon your noble works on German philosophy, and I upon this study. So neither of us has missed his vocation; and you, when you see your name here, will feel, no doubt, as much pleasure as he who inscribes his work to you.—Your old schoolfellow,*

1840. *De Balzac.*

It was one o'clock in the morning, during the winter of 1829–30, but in the Vicomtesse de Grandlieu's salon two persons stayed on who did not belong to her family circle. A young and good-looking man heard the clock strike, and took his leave. When the courtyard echoed with the sound of a departing carriage, the Vicomtesse looked up, saw that no one was present save her brother

and a friend of the family finishing their game of piquet, and went across to her daughter. The girl, standing by the chimney-piece, apparently examining a transparent fire-screen, was listening to the sounds from the courtyard in a way that justified certain maternal fears.

"Camille," said the Vicomtesse, "if you continue to behave to young Comte de Restaud as you have done this evening, you will oblige me to see no more of him here. Listen, child, and if you have any confidence in my love, let me guide you in life. At seventeen one cannot judge of past or future, nor of certain social considerations. I have only one thing to say to you. M. de Restaud has a mother, a mother who would waste millions of francs; a woman of no birth, a Mlle. Goriot; people talked a good deal about her at one time. She behaved so badly to her own father, that she certainly does not deserve to have so good a son. The young Count adores her, and maintains her in her position with dutifulness worthy of all praise, and he is extremely good to his brother and sister.—But however admirable *his* behavior may be," the Vicomtesse added with a shrewd expression, "so long as his mother lives, any family would take alarm at the idea of intrusting a daughter's fortune and future to young Restaud."

"I overheard a word now and again in your talk with Mlle. de Grandlieu," cried the friend of the family, "and it made me anxious to put in a word of my own.—I have won, M. le Comte," he added, turning to his opponent. "I shall throw you over and go to your niece's assistance."

"See what it is to have an attorney's ears!" exclaimed the Vicomtesse. "My dear Derville, how could you know what I was saying to Camille in a whisper?"

"I knew it from your looks," answered Derville, seating himself in a low chair by the fire.

Camille's uncle went to her side, and Mme. de Grandlieu took up her position on a hearth stool between her daughter and Derville.

"The time has come for telling a story which should modify your judgment as to Ernest de Restaud's prospects."

"A story?" cried Camille. "Do begin at once, monsieur."

The glance that Derville gave the Vicomtesse told her that this tale was meant for her. The Vicomtesse de Grandlieu, be it said, was one of the greatest ladies in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, by reason of her fortune and her ancient name; and though it may seem improbable that a Paris attorney should speak so familiarly to her, or be so much at home in her house, the fact is nevertheless easily explained.

When Mme de Grandlieu returned to France with the Royal family, she came to Paris, and at first lived entirely on the pension allowed her out of the Civil List by Louis XVIII.—an intolerable position. The Hôtel de Grandlieu had been sold by the Republic. It came to Derville's knowledge that there were flaws in the title, and he thought that it ought to return to the Vicomtesse. He instituted proceedings for nullity of contract, and gained the day. Encouraged by this success, he used legal quibbles to such purpose that he compelled some institution or other to dis-

gorge the Forest of Liceney. Then he won certain lawsuits against the Canal d'Orléans, and recovered a tolerably large amount of property, with which the Emperor had endowed various public institutions. So it fell out that, thanks to the young attorney's skillful management, Mme. de Grandlieu's income reached the sum of some sixty thousand francs, to say nothing of the vast sums returned to her by the law of indemnity. And Derville, a man of high character, well informed, modest, and pleasant in company, became the house-friend of the family.

By his conduct of Mme. de Grandlieu's affairs he had fairly earned the esteem of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and numbered the best families among his clients; but he did not take advantage of his popularity, as an ambitious man might have done. The Vicomtesse would have had him sell his practice and enter the magistracy, in which career advancement would have been swift and certain with such influence at his disposal; but he persistently refused all offers. He only went into society to keep up his connections, but he occasionally spent an evening at the Hôtel de Grandlieu. It was a very lucky thing for him that his talents had been brought into the light by his devotion to Mme. de Grandlieu, for his practice otherwise might have gone to pieces. Derville had not an attorney's soul. Since Ernest de Restaud had appeared at the Hôtel de Grandlieu, and he had noticed that Camille felt attracted to the young man, Derville had been as assiduous in his visits as any dandy of the Chaussée-d'Antin newly admitted to the noble Faubourg. At a ball only a few days before, when he happened to stand near Camille, and said, indicating the Count—

"It is a pity that yonder youngster has not two or three million francs, is it not?"

"Is it a pity? I do not think so," the girl answered. "M. de Restaud has plenty of ability; he is well educated, and the Minister, his chief, thinks well of him. He will be a remarkable man, I have no doubt. 'Yonder youngster' will have as much money as he wishes when he comes into power."

"Yes, but suppose that he were rich already?"

"Rich already?" repeated Camille, flushing red. "Why, all the girls in the room would be quarreling for him," she added, glancing at the quadrilles.

"And then," retorted the attorney, "Mlle. de Grandlieu might not be the one towards whom his eyes are always turned? That is what that red color means! You like him, do you not? Come, speak out."

Camille suddenly rose to go.

"She loves him," Derville thought.

Since that evening, Camille had been unwontedly attentive to the attorney, who approved of her liking for Ernest de Restaud. Hitherto, although she knew well that her family lay under great obligations to Derville, she had felt respect rather than real friendship for him, their relation was more a matter of politeness than of warmth of feeling; and by her manner, and by the tones of her voice, she had always made him sensible of the distance which socially lay between them. Gratitude is a charge upon the inheritance which the second generation is apt to repudiate.

"This adventure," Derville began after a pause, "brings the one romantic event in my life to my mind. You are laughing already," he went on; "it seems so ridiculous, doesn't it, that an attorney should speak of a romance in his life? But once I was five-and-twenty, like everybody else, and even then I had seen some queer things. I ought to begin at the beginning by telling you about someone whom it is impossible that you should have known. The man in question was a usurer.

"Can you grasp a clear notion of that sallow, wan face of his? I wish the *Académie* would give me leave to dub such faces the *lunar* type. It was like silvergilt, with the gilt rubbed off. His hair was iron-gray, sleek, and carefully combed; his features might have been cast in bronze; Talleyrand himself was not more impassive than this money-lender. A pair of little eyes, yellow as a ferret's, and with scarce an eyelash to them, peered out from under the sheltering peak of a shabby old cap, as if they feared the light. He had the thin lips that you see in Rembrandt's or Metsu's portraits of alchemists and shrunken old men, and a nose so sharp at the tip that it put you in mind of a gimlet. His voice was low; he always spoke suavely; he never flew into a passion. His age was a problem; it was hard to say whether he had grown old before his time, or whether by economy of youth he had saved enough to last him his life.

"This room, and everything in it, from the green baize of his bureau to the strip of carpet by the bed, was as clean and threadbare as the chilly sanctuary of some elderly spinster who spends her days in rubbing her furniture. In winter time, the live brands of the fire smoldered all day in a bank of ashes; there was never any flame in his grate. He went through his day, from his uprising to his evening coughing-fit with the regularity of a pendulum, and in some sort was a clockwork man, wound up by a night's slumber. Touch a wood-louse on an excursion across your sheet of paper, and the creature shams death; and in something the same way my acquaintance would stop short in the middle of a sentence, while a cart went by, to save the strain to his voice. Following the example of Fontenelle, he was thrifty of pulse-strokes, and concentrated all human sensibility in the innermost sanctuary of Self.

"His life flowed soundless as the sands of an hour-glass. His victims sometimes flew into a rage and made a great deal of noise, followed by a great silence; so is it in a kitchen after a fowl's neck has been wrung.

"Toward evening this bill of exchange incarnate would assume ordinary human shape, and his metals were metamorphosed into a human heart. When he was satisfied with his day's business, he would rub his hands; his inward glee would escape like smoke through every rift and wrinkle of his face;—in no other way is it possible to give an idea of the mute play of muscle which expressed sensations similar to the soundless laughter of *Leatherstocking*. Indeed, even in transports of joy, his conversation was confined to monosyllables; he wore the same non-committal countenance.

"This was the neighbor Chance found for me in the house in the Rue des

Grès, where I used to live when as yet I was only a second clerk finishing my third year's studies. The house is damp and dark, and boasts no courtyard. All the windows look on the street; the whole dwelling, in claustral fashion, is divided into rooms or cells of equal size, all opening upon a long corridor dimly lit with borrowed lights. The place must have been part of an old convent once. So gloomy was it, that the gayety of eldest sons forsook them on the stairs before they reached my neighbor's door. He and his house were much alike; even so does the oyster resemble his native rock.

"I was the one creature with whom he had any communication, socially speaking; he would come in to ask for a light, to borrow a book or a newspaper, and of an evening he would allow me to go into his cell, and when he was in the humor we would chat together. These marks of confidence were the results of four years of neighborhood and my sober conduct. From sheer lack of pence, I was bound to live pretty much as he did. Had he any relations or friends? Was he rich or poor? Nobody could give an answer to these questions. I myself never saw money in his room. Doubtless his capital was safely stowed in the strong rooms of the Bank. He used to collect his bills himself as they fell due, running all over Paris on a pair of shanks as skinny as a stag's. On occasion he could be a martyr to prudence. Once day, when he happened to have gold in his pockets, a double napoleon worked its way, somehow or other, out of his fob and fell, and another lodger following him up the stairs picked up the coin and returned it to its owner.

"'That isn't mine!' said he, with a start of surprise. 'Mine indeed! If I were rich, should I live as I do!'

"He made his cup of coffee himself every morning on the cast-iron chafing dish which stood all day in the black angle of the grate; his dinner came in from a cookshop; and our old porter's wife went up at the prescribed hour to set his room in order. Finally, a whimsical chance, in which Sterne would have seen predestination, had named the man Gobseck. When I did business for him later, I came to know that he was about seventy-six years old at the time when we became acquainted. He was born about 1740, in some outlying suburb of Antwerp, of a Dutch father and a Jewish mother, and his name was Jean-Esther Van Gobseck. You remember how all Paris took an interest in that murder case, a woman named *La belle Hollandaise*? I happened to mention it to my old neighbor, and he answered without the slightest symptom of interest or surprise, 'She is my grandniece.'

"That was the only remark drawn from him by the death of his sole surviving next of kin, his sister's granddaughter. From reports of the case I found that *La belle Hollandaise* was in fact named Sara Van Gobseck. When I asked by what curious chance his grandniece came to bear his surname, he smiled—

"'The women never marry in our family.'

"Singular creature, he had never cared to find out a single relative among four generations counted on the female side.

The thought of his heirs was abhorrent to him; and the idea that his wealth could pass into other hands after his death simply inconceivable.

"He was a child, ten years old, when his mother shipped him off as cabin boy on a voyage to the Dutch Straits Settlements, and there he knocked about for twenty years. The inscrutable lines on that sallow forehead kept the secret of horrible adventures, sudden panic, unhoped-for luck, romantic cross events, joys that knew no limit, hunger endured and love trampled underfoot, fortunes risked, lost, and recovered, life endangered time and time again, and saved, it may be, by one of the rapid, ruthless decisions absolved by necessity. He had known Admiral Simeuse, M. de Lally, M. de Kergarouët, M. d'Estaing, *le Bailli de Suffren*, M. de Portenduère, Lord Cornwallis, Lord Hastings, Tippoo Sahib's father, Tippoo Sahib himself. The bully who served Mahadaji Sindhia, King of Delhi, and did so much to found the power of the Mahrattas, had had dealings with Gobseck. Long residence at St. Thomas brought him in contact with Victor Hughes and other notorious pirates. In his quest of fortune he had left no stone unturned; witness an attempt to discover the treasure of that tribe of savages so famous in Buenos Ayres and its neighborhood. He had a personal knowledge of the events of the American War of Independence. But if he spoke of the Indies or of America, as he did very rarely with me, and never with anyone else, he seemed to regard it as an indiscretion and to repent of it afterwards. If humanity and sociability are in some sort a religion, Gobseck might be ranked as an infidel; but though I set myself to study him, I must confess, to my shame, that his real nature was impenetrable up to the very last. I even felt doubts at times as to his sex. If all usurers are like this one, I maintain that they belong to the neuter gender.

"Did he adhere to his mother's religion? Did he look on Gentiles as his legitimate prey? Had he turned Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Mohametan, Brahmin, or what not? I never knew anything whatsoever about his religious opinions, and so far as I could see, he was indifferent rather than incredulous.

"One evening I went in to see this man who had turned himself to gold; the usurer, whom his victims (his clients, as he styled them) were wont to call Daddy Gobseck, perhaps ironically, perhaps by way of antiphrasis. He was sitting in his armchair, motionless as a statue, staring fixedly at the mantelshelf, where he seemed to read the figures of his statements. A lamp, with a pedestal that had once been green, was burning in the room; but so far from taking color from its smoky light, his face seemed to stand out positively paler against the background. He pointed to a chair set for me, but not a word did he say.

"'What thoughts can this being have in his mind?' said I to myself. 'Does he know that a God exists; does he know there are such things as feeling, woman, happiness?' I pitied him as I might have pitied a diseased creature. But, at the same time, I knew quite well that while he had millions of francs at his command, he possessed the world no less in idea—that world which he

had explored, ransacked, weighed, appraised, and exploited.

"'Good-day, Daddy Gobseck,' I began.

"He turned his face towards me, with a slight contraction of his bushy, black eyebrows; this characteristic shade of expression in him meant as much as the most jubilant smile on a Southern face.

"'You look just as gloomy as you did that day when the news came of the failure of that bookseller whose sharpness you admired so much, though you were one of his victims.'

"'One of his victims?' he repeated, with a look of astonishment.

"'Yes. Did you not refuse to accept composition at the meeting of creditors until he undertook privately to pay you your debt in full; and did he not give you bills accepted by the insolvent firm; and then, when he set up in business again, did he not pay you the dividend upon those bills of yours, signed as they were by the bankrupt firm?'

"'He was a sharp one, but I had it out of him.'

"'Then have you some bills to protest? To-day is the 30th, I believe.'

"It was the first time that I had spoken to him of money. He looked ironically up at me; then in those bland accents, not unlike the husky tones which the tyro draws from a flute, he answered, 'I am amusing myself.'

"'So you amuse yourself now and again?'

"'Do you imagine that the only poets in the world are those who print their verses?' he asked, with a pitying look and shrug of the shoulders.

"'Poetry in that head!' thought I, for as yet I knew nothing of his life.

"'What life could be as glorious as mine?' he continued, and his eyes lighted up. 'You are young, your mental visions are colored by youthful blood, you see women's faces in the fire, while I see nothing but coals in mine. You have all sorts of beliefs, while I have no beliefs at all. Keep your illusions—if you can. Now I will show you life with the discount taken off. Go wherever you like, or stay at home by the fireside with your wife, there always comes a time when you settle down in a certain groove, the groove of your preference; and then happiness consists in the exercise of your faculties by applying them to realities. Anything more in the way of precept is false. My principles have been various, among various men; I had to change them with every change of latitude. Things that we admire in Europe are punishable in Asia, and a vice in Paris becomes a necessity when you have passed the Azores. There are no such things as hard-and-fast rules; there are only conventions adapted to the climate. Fling a man headlong into one social melting pot after another, and convictions and forms and moral systems become so many meaningless words to him. The one thing that always remains, the one sure instinct that nature has implanted in us, is the instinct of self-preservation. In European society you call this instinct self-interest. If you had lived as long as I have, you would know that there is but one concrete reality invariable enough to be worth caring about, and that is—Gold. Gold represents every form of human power. I have traveled. I found out that there were either hills or plains everywhere; the plains are monotonous, the

hills a weariness; consequently, place may be left out of the question. As to manners; man is man all the world over. The same battle between the poor and the rich is going on everywhere; it is inevitable everywhere; consequently, it is better to exploit than to be exploited. Everywhere you find the man of thews and sinews who toils, and the lymphatic man who torments himself; and pleasures are everywhere the same, for when all sensations are exhausted, all that survives is Vanity—Vanity is the abiding substance of us, the *I* in us. Vanity is only to be satisfied by gold in floods. Our dreams need time and physical means and painstaking thought before they can be realized. Well, gold contains all things in embryo; gold realizes all things for us.

"'None but fools and invalids can find pleasure in shuffling cards all evening long to find out whether they shall win a few pence at the end. None but driveling idiots could spend time in inquiring into all that is happening around them, whether Madame Such-an-One slept single on her couch or in company, whether she has more blood than lymph, more temperament than virtue. None but the dupes, who fondly imagine that they are useful to their like, can interest themselves in laying down rules for political guidance amid events which neither they nor anyone else foresees, nor ever will foresee. None but simpletons can delight in talking about stage players and repeating their sayings; making the daily promenade of a caged animal over a rather larger area; dressing for others, eating for others, priding themselves on a horse or a carriage such as no neighbor can have until three days later. What is all this but Parisian life summed up in a few phrases? Let us find a higher outlook on life than theirs. Happiness consists either in strong emotions which drain our vitality, or in methodical occupation which makes existence like a bit of English machinery, working with the regularity of clockwork. A higher happiness than either consists in a curiosity, styled noble, a wish to learn Nature's secrets, or to attempt by artificial means to imitate Nature to some extent. What is this in two words but Science and Art, or passion or calm?—Ah! well, every human passion wrought up to its highest pitch in the struggle for existence comes to parade itself here before me—as I live in calm. As for your scientific curiosity, a kind of wrestling but in which man is never uppermost, I replace it by an insight into all the springs of action in man and woman. To sum up, the world is mine without effort of mine, and the world has not the slightest hold on me. Listen to this,' he went on, 'I will tell you the history of my morning, and you will divine my pleasure.'

"He got up, pushed the bolt of the door, drew a tapestry curtain across it with a sharp grating sound of the rings on the rod, then he sat down again.

"'This morning,' he said, 'I had only two amounts to collect; the rest of the bills that were due I gave away instead of cash to my customers yesterday. So much saved you see, for when I discount a bill I always deduct two francs for a hired brougham—expenses of collection. A pretty thing it would be, would it not, if my clients were to set *me* trudging all over Paris for half a

dozen francs of discount, when no man is my master, and I only pay seven francs in the shape of taxes?

"'The first bill for a thousand francs was presented by a young fellow, a smart buck with a spangled waistcoat, and an eyeglass, and a tilbury and an English horse, and all the rest of it. The bill bore the signature of one of the prettiest women in Paris, married to a Count, a great landowner. Now, how came that Countess to put her name to a bill of exchange, legally not worth the paper it was written upon, but practically very good business; for these women, poor things, are afraid of the scandal that a protested bill makes in a family, and would give themselves away in payment sooner than fail? I wanted to find out what that bill of exchange really represented. Was it stupidity, imprudence, love, or charity?

"'The second bill, bearing the signature "Fanny Malvaut," came to me from a linen-draper on the high way to bankruptcy. Now, no creature who has any credit with a bank comes to *me*. The first step to my door means that a man is desperately hard up; that the news of his failure will soon come out; and, most of all, it means that he has been everywhere else first. The stag is always at bay when I see him, and a pack of creditors are hard upon his track. The Countess lived in the Rue du Helder, and my Fanny in the Rue Montmartre. How many conjectures I made as I set out this morning! If these two women were not able to pay, they would show me more respect than they would show their own fathers. What tricks and grimaces would not the Countess try for a thousand francs! She would be so nice to me, she would talk to me in that ingratiating tone peculiar to indorsers of bills, she would pour out a torrent of coaxing words, perhaps she would beg and pray, and I . . .' (here the old man turned his pale eyes upon me)—'and I not to be moved, inexorable!' he continued. 'I am there as the avenger, the apparition of Remorse. So much for hypotheses. I reached the house.

"'"Madame la Comtesse is asleep," says the maid.

"'"When can I see her?"

"'"At twelve o'clock."

"'"Is Madame la Comtesse ill?"

"'"No, sir, but she only came home at three o'clock this morning from a ball."

"'"My name is Gobseck, tell her that I shall call again at twelve o'clock," and out I went, leaving traces of my muddy boots on the carpet which covered the paved staircase. I like to leave mud on a rich man's carpet; it is not petty spite; I like to make them feel a touch of the claws of Necessity. In the Rue Montmartre I thrust open the old gateway of a poor-looking house, and looked into a dark courtyard where the sunlight never shines. The porter's lodge was grimy, the window looked like the sleeve of some shabby wadded gown—greasy, dirty, and full of holes.

"'"Mlle. Fanny Malvaut?"

"'"She has gone out; but if you come about a bill, the money is waiting for you."

"'"I will look in again," said I.

"'As soon as I knew that the porter had the money for me, I wanted to know what the girl was like; I pictured her as pretty. The rest of the morning

I spent in looking at the prints in the shop windows along the boulevard; then, just as it struck twelve, I went through the Countess's antechamber.

"'"Madame has just this minute rung for me," said the maid; "I don't think she can see you yet."

"'"I will wait," said I, and sat down in an easy-chair.

"'Venetian shutters were opened, and presently the maid came hurrying back.

"'"Come in, sir."

"'From the sweet tone of the girl's voice, I knew that the mistress could not be ready to pay. What a handsome woman it was that I saw in another moment! She had flung an Indian shawl hastily over her bare shoulders, covering herself with it completely, while it revealed the bare outlines of the form beneath. She wore a loose gown trimmed with snowy ruffles, which told plainly that her laundress's bills amounted to something like two thousand francs in the course of a year. Her dark curls escaped from beneath a bright Indian handkerchief, knotted carelessly about her head after the fashion of Creole women. The bed lay in disorder that told of broken slumber. A painter would have paid money to stay a while to see the scene that I saw. Under the luxurious hanging draperies, the pillow, crushed into the depths of an eider-down quilt, its lace border standing in contrast against the background of blue silk, bore a vague impress that kindled the imagination. A pair of satin slippers gleamed from the great bear-skin rug spread by the carved mahogany lions at the bed-foot, where she had flung them off in weariness after the ball. A crumpled gown hung over a chair, the sleeves touching the floor; stockings which a breath would have blown away were twisted about the leg of an easy-chair; white ribbon garters straggled over a settee. A fan of price, half unfolded, glittered on the chimney-piece. Drawers stood open; flowers, diamonds, gloves, a bouquet, a girdle, were littered about. The room was full of vague sweet perfume. And—beneath all the luxury and disorder, beauty and incongruity, I saw Misery crouching in wait for her or for her adorer, Misery rearing its head, for the Countess had begun to feel the edge of those fangs. Her tired face was an epitome of the room strewn with relics of past festival. The scattered gew-gaws, pitiable this morning, when gathered together and coherent, had turned heads the night before.

"'What efforts to drink of the Tantalus cup of bliss I could read in these traces of love stricken by the thunderbolt remorse—in this visible presentment of a life of luxury, extravagance, and riot. There were faint red marks on her young face, signs of the fineness of the skin; but her features were coarsened, as it were, and the circles about her eyes were unwontedly dark. Nature nevertheless was so vigorous in her, that these traces of past folly did not spoil her beauty. Her eyes glittered. She looked like some *Herodias* of da Vinci's (I have dealt in pictures), so magnificently full of life and energy was she; there was nothing starved nor stinted in feature or outline; she awakened desire; it seemed to me that there was some passion in her yet stronger than love. I was taken with her. It was a long while since my heart had

throbbed; so I was paid then and there —for I would give a thousand francs for a sensation that should bring me back memories of youth.

"'"Monsieur," she said, finding a chair for me, "will you be so good as to wait?"

"'"Until this time to-morrow, madame," I said, folding up the bill again. "I cannot legally protest this bill any sooner." And within myself I said—"Pay the price of your luxury, pay for your name, pay for your ease, pay for the monopoly which you enjoy! The rich have invented judges and courts of law to secure their goods, and the guillotine—that candle in which so many an ignorant moth burns his wings. But for you who lie in silk, under silken coverlets, there is remorse and grinding of teeth beneath a smile and those fantastical lions' jaws are gaping to set their fangs in your heart."

"'"Protest the bill! Can you mean it?" she cried, with her eyes upon me; "could you have so little consideration for me?"

"'"If the King himself owed money to me, madame, and did not pay it, I should summons him even sooner than any other debtor."

"'While we were speaking, somebody tapped gently at the door.

"'"I cannot see anyone," she cried imperiously.

"'"But, Anastasie, I particularly wish to speak to you."

"'"Not just now, dear," she answered in a milder tone, but with no sign of relenting.

"'"What nonsense! You are talking to someone," said the voice, and in came a man who could only be the Count.

"'The Countess gave me a glance. I saw how it was. She was thoroughly in my power. There was a time when I was young, and might perhaps have been stupid enough not to protest the bill. At Pondicherry, in 1763, I let a woman off, and nicely she paid me out afterwards. I deserved it; what call was there for me to trust her?

"'"What does this gentleman want?" asked the Count.

"'I could see that the Countess was trembling from head to foot; the white satin skin of her throat was rough, "turned to goose flesh," to use the familiar expression. As for me, I laughed in myself without moving a muscle.

"'"This gentleman is one of my tradesmen," she said.

"'The Count turned his back on me; I drew the bill half out of my pocket. After that inexorable movement, she came over to me and put a diamond into my hands. "Take it," she said, "and be gone."

"'We exchanged values, and I made my bow and went. The diamond was worth twelve hundred francs to me. Out in the courtyard I saw a swarm of flunkeys, brushing their liveries, waxing their boots, and cleaning sumptuous equipages.

"'"This is what brings these people to me!" said I to myself. "It is to keep up this kind of thing that they steal millions with all due formalities, and betray their country. The great lord, and the little man who apes the great lord, bathes in mud once for all to save himself a splash or two when he goes afoot through the streets."

"'Just then the great gates were

opened to admit a cabriolet. It was the same young feullow who had brought the bill to me.

"'"Sir," I said, as he alighted, "here are two hundred francs, which I beg you to return to Mme. la Comtesse, and have the goodness to tell her that I hold the pledge which she deposited with me this morning at her disposition for a week."

"'He took the two hundred francs, and an ironical smile stole over his face; it was as if he had said, "Aha! so she has paid it, has she? . . . Faith, so much the better!" I read the Countess's future in his face. That good-looking, fair-haired young gentleman is a heartless gambler; he will ruin himself, ruin her, ruin her husband, ruin the children, eat up their portions, and work more havoc in Parisian salons than a whole battery of howitzers in a regiment.

"'I went back to see Mlle. Fanny in the Rue Montmartre, climbed a very steep, narrow staircase, and reached a two-roomed dwelling on the fifth floor. Everything was as neat as a new ducat. I did not see a speck of dust on the furniture in the first room, where Mlle. Fanny was sitting. Mlle. Fanny herself was a young Parisian girl, quietly dressed, with a delicate fresh face, and a winning look. The arrangement of her neatly brushed chestnut hair in a double curve on her forehead lent a refined expression to blue eyes, clear as crystal. The broad daylight streaming in through the short curtains against the window pane fell with softened light on her girlish face. A pile of shaped pieces of linen told me that she was a seamstress. She looked like the spirit of solitude. When I held out the bill, I remarked that she had not been at home when I called in the morning.

"'"But the money was left with the porter's wife," said she.

"'I pretended not to understand.

"'"You go out early, mademoiselle, it seems."

"'"I very seldom leave my room; but when you work all night, you are obliged to take a bath sometimes."

"'I looked at her. A glance told me about her life. Here was a girl condemned by misfortune to toil, a girl who came of honest farmer folk, for she had still a freckle or two that told of country birth. There was an indefinable atmosphere of goodness about her; I felt as if I were breathing sincerity and frank innocence. It was refreshing to my lungs. Poor innocent child, she had faith in something; there was a crucifix and a sprig or two of green box above her poor little painted wooden bedstead; I felt touched, or somewhat inclined that way. I felt ready to offer to charge no more than twelve per cent., and so give something towards establishing her in a good way of business.

"'"But may be she has a little youngster of a cousin," I said to myself, "who would raise money on her signature and sponge on the poor girl."

"'So I went away, keeping my generous impulses well under control; for I have frequently had occasion to observe that when benevolence does no harm to him who gives, it is the ruin of him who takes. When you came in I was thinking that Fanny Malvaut would make a nice little wife; I was

thinking of the contrast between her pure, lonely life and the life of the Countess—she has sunk as low as a bill of exchange already, she will sink to the lowest depths of degradation before she has done!'—I scrutinized him during the deep silence that followed, but in a moment he spoke again. 'Well,' he said, 'do you think that it is nothing to have this power of insight into the deepest recesses of the human heart, to embrace so many lives, to see the naked truth underlying it all? There are no two dramas alike: there are hideous sores, deadly chagrins, love scenes, misery that soon will lie under the ripples of the Seine, young men's joys that lead to the scaffold, the laughter of despair, and sumptuous banquets. Yesterday it was a tragedy. A worthy soul of a father drowned himself because he could not support his family. To-morrow it is a comedy; some youngster will try to rehearse the scene of M. Dimanche, brought up to date. You have heard people extol the eloquence of our latter day preachers; now and again I have wasted my time by going to hear them; they produced a change in my opinions, but in my conduct (as somebody said, I can't recollect his name), in my conduct—never!—Well, well; these good priests and your Mirabeaus and Vergniauds and the rest of them are mere stammering beginners compared with these orators of mine.

"'Often it is some girl in love, some gray-headed merchant on the verge of bankruptcy, some mother with a son's wrongdoing to conceal, some starving artist, some great man whose influence is on the wane, and, for lack of money, is like to lose the fruit of all his labors—the power of their pleading has made me shudder. Sublime actors such as these play for me, for an audience of one, and they cannot deceive me. I can look into their inmost thoughts, and read them as God reads them. Nothing is hidden from me. Nothing is refused to the holder of the purse-strings to loose and to bind. I am rich enough to buy the consciences of those who control the action of ministers, from their office boys to their mistresses. Is not that Power?—I can possess the fairest women, receive their softest caresses; is not that Pleasure? And is not your whole social economy summed up in terms of Power and Pleasure?

"'There are ten of us in Paris, silent, unknown kings, the arbiters of your destinies. What is life but a machine set in motion by money? Know this for certain—methods are always confounded with results! you will never succeed in separating the soul from the senses, spirit from matter. Gold is the spiritual basis of existing society.—The ten of us are bound by the ties of common interest; we meet on certain days of the week at the Café Thémis near the Pont Neuf, and there, in conclave, we reveal the mysteries of finance. No fortune can deceive us; we are in possession of family secrets in all directions. We keep a kind of Black Book, in which we note the most important bills issued, drafts on public credit, or on banks, or given and taken in the course of business. We are the Casuists of the Paris Bourse, a kind of Inquisition weighing and analyzing the most insignificant actions of every man of any fortune, and our forecasts are infallible. One of us looks out over the

judicial world, one over the financial, another surveys the administrative, and yet another the business world. I myself keep an eye on eldest sons, artists, people in the great world, and gamblers —on the most sensational side of Paris. Everyone who comes to us lets us into his neighbor's secrets. Thwarted passion and mortified vanity are great babblers. Vice and disappointment and vindictiveness are the best of all detectives. My colleagues, like myself, have enjoyed all things, are sated with all things, and have reached the point when power and money are loved for their own sake.

"'Here,' he said, indicating his bare, chilly room, 'here the most high-mettled gallant, who chafes at a word and draws sword for a syllable elsewhere, will entreat with clasped hands. There is no city-merchant so proud, no woman so vain of her beauty, no soldier of so bold a spirit, but that they entreat me here, one and all, with tears of rage or anguish in their eyes. Here they kneel—the famous artist, and the man of letters, whose name will go down to posterity. Here, in short' (he lifted his hand to his forehead), 'all the inheritances and all the concerns of all Paris are weighed in the balance. Are you still of the opinion that there are no delights behind the blank mask which so often has amazed you by its impassiveness?' he asked, stretching out that livid face which reeked of money.

"I went back to my room, feeling stupefied. The little, wizened, old man had grown great. He had been metamorphosed under my eyes into a strange visionary symbol; he had come to be the power of gold personified. I shrank, shuddering, from life and my kind.

"'Is it really so?' I thought; 'must everything be resolved into gold?'

"I remember that it was long before I slept that night. I saw heaps of gold all about me. My thoughts were full of the lovely Countess; I confess, to my shame, that the vision completely eclipsed another quiet, innocent figure, the figure of the woman who had entered upon a life of toil and obscurity; but on the morrow, through the clouds of slumber, Fanny's sweet face rose before me in all its beauty, and I thought of nothing else."

"Will you take a glass of *eau sucrée?*" asked the Vicomtesse, interrupting Derville.

"I should be glad of it."

"But I can see nothing in this that can touch our concerns," said Mme. de Grandlieu, as she rang the bell.

"Sardanapalus!" cried Derville, flinging out his favorite invocation. "Mademoiselle Camille will be wide awake in a moment if I say that her happiness depended not so long ago upon Daddy Gobseck; but as the old gentleman died at the age of ninety, M. de Restaud will soon be in possession of a handsome fortune. This requires some explanation. As for Fanny Malvaut, you know her; she is my wife."

"Poor fellow, he would admit that, with his usual frankness, with a score of people to hear him!" said the Vicomtesse.

"I would proclaim it to the universe," said the attorney.

"Go on, drink your glass, my poor

Derville. You will never be anything but the happiest and the best of men."

"I left you in the Rue du Helder," remarked the uncle, raising his face after a gentle doze. "You had gone to see a Countess; what have you done with her?"

"A few days after my conversation with the old Dutchman," Derville continued, "I sent in my thesis, and became first a licentiate in law, and afterwards an advocate. The old miser's opinion of me went up considerably. He consulted me (gratuitously) on all the ticklish bits of business which he undertook when he had made quite sure how he stood, business which would have seemed unsafe to any ordinary practitioner. This man, over whom no one appeared to have the slightest influence listened to my advice with something like respect. It is true that he always found that it turned out very well.

"At length I became head-clerk in the office where I had worked for three years, and then I left the Rue des Grès for rooms in my employer's house. I had my board and lodging and a hundred and fifty francs per month. It was a great day for me!

"When I went to bid the usurer goodby, he showed no sign of feeling, he was neither cordial nor sorry to lose me, he did not ask me to come to see him, and only gave me one of those glances which seemed in some sort to reveal a power of second sight.

"By the end of a week my old neighbor came to see me with a tolerably thorny bit of business, an expropriation, and he continued to ask my advice with as much freedom as if he paid for it.

"My principal was a man of pleasure and expensive tastes; before the second year (1818–1819) was out he had got himself into difficulties, and was obliged to sell his practice. A professional connection in those days did not fetch the present exorbitant prices, and my principal asked a hundred and fifty thousand francs. Now an active man, of competent knowledge and intelligence, might hope to pay off the capital in ten years, paying interest and living respectably in the meantime—if he could command confidence. But I was the seventh child of a small tradesman at Noyon; I had not a sou to my name, nor personal knowledge of any capitalist but Daddy Gobseck. An ambitious idea, and an indefinable glimmer of hope, put heart into me. To Gobseck I betook myself, and slowly one evening I made my way to the Rue des Grès. My heart thumped heavily as I knocked at his door in the gloomy house. I recollected all the things that he used to tell me, at a time when I myself was very far from suspecting the violence of the anguish awaiting those who crossed his threshold. Now it was I who was about to beg and pray like so many others.

"'Well, no, not *that*,' I said to myself; 'an honest man must keep his self-respect wherever he goes. Success is not worth cringing for; let us show him a front as decided as his own.'

"Daddy Gobseck had taken my room since I left the house, so as to have no neighbor; he had made a little grated window too in his door since then, and

did not open until he had taken a look at me and saw who I was.

"'Well,' said he, in his thin, flute notes, 'so your principal is selling his practice.'

"'How did you know that?' said I; 'he has not spoken of it as yet except to me.'

"The old man's lips were drawn in puckers, like a curtain, to either corner of his mouth, as a soundless smile bore a hard glance company.

"'Nothing else would have brought you here," he said dryly, after a pause, which I spent in confusion.

"'Listen to me, M. Gobseck,' I began, with such serenity as I could assume before the old man, who gazed at me with steady eyes. There was a clear light burning in them that disconcerted me.

"He made a gesture as if to bid me 'Go on.' 'I know that it is not easy to work on your feelings, so I will not waste my eloquence on the attempt to put my position before you—I am a penniless clerk, with no one to look to but you, and no heart in the world but yours can form a clear idea of my probable future. Let us leave hearts out of the question. Business is business, and business is not carried on with sentimentality like romances. Now to the facts. My principal's practice is worth in his hands about twenty thousand francs per annum; in my hands, I think it would bring in forty thousand. He is willing to sell it for a hundred and fifty thousand francs. And *here,*' I said, striking my forehead, 'I feel that if you would lend me the purchase-money, I could clear it off in ten years' time.'

"'Come, that is plain speaking,' said Daddy Gobseck, and he held out his hand and grasped mine. 'Nobody since I have been in business has stated the motives of his visit more clearly. Guarantees?' asked he, scanning me from head to foot. 'None to give,' he added after a pause. 'How old are you?'

"'Twenty-five in ten days' time,' said I, 'or I could not open the matter.'

"'Precisely.'

"'Well?'

"'It is possible.'

"'My word, we must be quick about it, or I shall have someone buying over my head.'

"'Bring your certificate of birth round to-morrow morning, and we will talk. I will think it over.'

"Next morning, at eight o'clock, I stood in the old man's room. He took the document, put on his spectacles, coughed, spat, wrapped himself up in his black greatcoat, and read the whole certificate through from beginning to end. Then he turned it over and over, looked at me, coughed again, fidgeted about in his chair, and said, 'We will try to arrange this bit of business.'

"I trembled.

"'I make fifty per cent. on my capital,' he continued, 'sometimes I make a hundred, two hundred, five hundred per cent.'

"I turned pale at the words.

"'But as we are acquaintances, I shall be satisfied to take twelve and a half per cent. per'—(he hesitated)—'well, yes, from you I would be content to take thirteen per cent. per annum. Will that suit you?'

"'Yes,' I answered.

"'But if it is too much, stick up for

yourself, Grotius!' (a name he jokingly gave me). 'When I ask you for thirteen per cent., it is all in the way of business; look into it, see if you can pay it; I don't like a man to agree too easily. Is it too much?'

"'No,' said I, 'I will make up for it by working a little harder.'

"'Gad; your clients will pay for it!' said he, looking at me wickedly out of the corner of his eyes.

"'No, by all the devils in hell!' cried I, 'it shall be I who will pay. I would sooner cut my hand off than flay people.'

"'Good-night,' said Daddy Gobseck.

"'Why, fees are all according to scale,' I added.

"'Not for compromises and settlements out of Court, and cases where litigants come to terms,' said he. 'You can send in a bill for thousands of francs, six thousand even at a swoop (it depends on the importance of the case), for conferences with So-and-so, and expenses, and drafts, and memorials, and your jargon. A man must learn to look out for business of this kind. I will recommend you as a most competent, clever attorney. I will send you such a lot of work of this sort that your colleagues will be fit to burst with envy. Werbrust, Palma, and Gigonnet, my cronies, shall hand over their expropriations to you; they have plenty of them, the Lord knows! So you will have two practices—the one you are buying, and the other I will build up for you. You ought almost to pay me fifteen per cent. on my loan.'

"'So be it, but no more,' said I, with the firmness which means that a man is determined not to concede another point.

"Daddy Gobseck's face relaxed; he looked pleased with me.

"'I shall pay the money over to your principal myself,' said he, 'so as to establish a lien on the purchase and caution-money.'

"'Oh, anything you like in the way of guarantees.'

"'And besides that, you will give me bills for the amount made payable to a third party (name left blank), fifteen bills of ten thousand francs each.'

"'Well, so long as it is acknowledged in writing that this is a double——'

"'No!' Gobseck broke in upon me. 'No! Why should I trust you any more than you trust me?'

"I kept silence.

"'And furthermore,' he continued, with a sort of good-humor, 'you will give me your advice without charging fees as long as I live, will you not?'

"'So be it; so long as there is no outlay.'

"'Precisely,' said he. 'Ah, by the by, you will allow me to go to see you?' (Plainly the old man found it not so easy to assume the air of good-humor.)

"'I shall always be glad.'

"'Ah! yes, but it would be very difficult to arrange of a morning. You will have your affairs to attend to, and I have mine.'

"'Then come in the evening.'

"'Oh, no!' he answered briskly, 'you ought to go into society and see your clients, and I myself have my friends at my café.'

"'His friends!' thought I to myself.—'Very well,' said I, 'why not come at dinner-time?'

"'That is the time,' said Gobseck, 'after 'Change, at five o'clock. Good, you will see me Wednesdays and Saturdays. We will talk over business like a pair of friends. Aha! I am gay sometimes. Just give me the wing of a partridge and a glass of champagne, and we will have our chat together. I know a great many things that can be told now at this distance of time; I will teach you to know men, and what is more—women!'

"'Oh! a partridge and a glass of champagne if you like.'

"'Don't do anything foolish, or I shall lose my faith in you. And don't set up housekeeping in a grand way. Just one old general servant. I will come and see that you keep your health. I have capital invested in your head, he! he! so I am bound to look after you. There, come round in the evening and bring your principal with you!'

"'Would you mind telling me, if there is no harm in asking, what was the good of my birth certificate in this business?' I asked, when the little old man and I stood on the doorstep.

"Jean-Esther Van Gobseck shrugged his shoulders, smiled maliciously, and said, 'What blockheads youngsters are! Learn, master attorney (for learn you must, if you don't mean to be taken in), that integrity and brains in a man under thirty are commodities which can be mortgaged. After that age there is no counting on a man.'

"And with that he shut the door.

"Three months later I was an attorney. Before very long, madame, it was my good fortune to undertake the suit for the recovery of your estates. I won the day, and my name became known. In spite of the exorbitant rate of interest, I paid off Gobseck in less than five years. I married Fanny Malvaut, whom I loved with all my heart. There was a parallel between her life and mine, between our hard work and our luck, which increased the strength of feeling on either side. One of her uncles, a well-to-do farmer, died and left her seventy thousand francs, which helped to clear off the loan. From that day my life has been nothing but happiness and prosperity. Nothing is more utterly uninteresting than a happy man, so let us say no more on that head, and return to the rest of the characters.

"About a year after the purchase of the practice, I was dragged into a bachelor breakfast-party given by one of our number who had lost a bet to a young man greatly in vogue in the fashionable world. M. de Trailles, the flower of the dandyism of that day, enjoyed a prodigious reputation."

"But he is still enjoying it," put in the Comte de Born. "No one wears his clothes with a finer air, nor drives a tandem with a better grace. It is Maxime's gift; he can gamble, eat, and drink more gracefully than any man in the world. He is a judge of horses, hats, and pictures. All the women lose their heads over him. He always spends something like a hundred thousand francs a year, and no creature can discover that he has an acre of land or a single dividend warrant. The typical knight errant of our salons, our boudoirs, our boulevards, an amphibian halfway between a man and a woman—Maxime de Trailles is a singular being, fit for anything, and good for nothing,

quite as capable of perpetrating a benefit as of planning a crime; sometimes base, sometimes noble, more often bespattered with mire than besprinkled with blood, knowing more of anxiety than of remorse, more concerned with his digestion than with any mental process, shamming passion, feeling nothing. Maxime de Trailles is a brilliant link between the hulks and the best society; he belongs to the eminently intelligent class from which a Mirabeau, or a Pitt, or a Richelieu springs at times, though it is more wont to produce Counts of Horn, Fouquier-Tinvilles, and Coignards."

"Well," pursued Derville, when he had heard the Vicomtesse's brother to the end, "I had heard a good deal about this individual from poor old Goriot, a client of mine; and I had already been at some pains to avoid the dangerous honor of his acquaintance, for I came across him sometimes in society. Still, my chum was so pressing about this breakfast-party of his, that I could not well get out of it, unless I wished to earn a name for squeamishness. Madame, you could hardly imagine what a bachelor's breakfast-party is like. It means superb display and a studied refinement seldom seen; the luxury of a miser when vanity leads him to be sumptuous for a day.

"You are surprised as you enter the room at the neatness of the table, dazzling by reason of its silver and crystal and linen damask. Life is here in full bloom; the young fellows are graceful to behold; they smile and talk in low, demure voices like so many brides; everything about them looks girlish. Two hours later you might take the room for a battlefield after the fight. Broken glasses, serviettes crumpled and torn to rags lie strewn about among the nauseous-looking remnants of food on the dishes. There is an uproar that stuns you, jesting toasts, a fire of witticisms and bad jokes; faces are empurpled, eyes inflamed and expressionless; unintentional confidences tell you the whole truth. Bottles are smashed, and songs trolled out in the height of a diabolical racket; men call each other out, hang on each other's necks, or fall to fisticuffs; the room is full of a horrid, close scent made up of a hundred odors, and noise enough for a hundred voices. No one has any notion of what he is eating or drinking or saying. Some are depressed, others babble; one will turn monomaniac, repeating the same word over and over again like a bell set jangling; another tries to keep the tumult within bounds; the steadiest will propose an orgy. If anyone in possession of his faculties should come in, he would think that he had interrupted a Bacchanalian rite.

"It was in the thick of such a chaos that M. de Trailles tried to insinuate himself into my good graces. My head was fairly clear, I was upon my guard. As for him, though he pretended to be decently drunk, he was perfectly cool, and knew very well what he was about. How it was done I do not know, but the upshot of it was that when we left Grignon's rooms about nine o'clock in the evening, M. de Trailles had thoroughly bewitched me. I had given him my promise that I would introduce him the next day to our Papa Gobseck. The words 'honor,' 'virtue,' 'countess,' 'honest woman,' and 'ill-luck' were mingled in his discourse with magical potency, thanks to that golden tongue of his.

"When I awoke next morning, and tried to recollect what I had done the day before, it was with great difficulty that I could make a connected tale from my impressions. At last, it seemed to me that the daughter of one of my clients was in danger of losing her reputation, together with her husband's love and esteem, if she could not get fifty thousand francs together in the course of the morning. There had been gaming debts, and carriage-builders' accounts, money lost to Heaven knows whom. My magician of a boon companion had impressed it upon me that she was rich enough to make good these reverses by a few years of economy. But only now did I begin to guess the reasons of his urgency. I confess, to my shame, that I had not the shadow of a doubt but that it was a matter of importance that Daddy Gobseck should make it up with this dandy. I was dressing when the young gentleman appeared.

"'M. le Comte,' said I, after the usual greetings, 'I fail to see why you should need me to effect an introduction to Van Gobseck, the most civil and smooth-spoken of capitalists. Money will be forthcoming if he has any, or rather, if you can give him adequate security.'

"'Monsieur,' said he, 'it does not enter into my thoughts to force you to do me a service, even though you have passed your word.'

"'Sardanapalus!' said I to myself, 'am I going to let that fellow imagine that I will not keep my word with him?'

"'I had the honor of telling you yesterday,' said he, 'that I had fallen out with Daddy Gobseck most inopportunely; and as there is scarcely another man in Paris who can come down on the nail with a hundred thousand francs, at the end of the month, I begged of you to make my peace with him. But let us say no more about it——'

"M. de Trailles looked at me with civil insult in his expression, and made as if he would take his leave.

"'I am ready to go with you,' said I.

"When we reached the Rue des Grès, my dandy looked about him with a circumspection and uneasiness that set me wondering. His face grew livid, flushed, and yellow, turn and turn about, and by the time that Gobseck's door came in sight the perspiration stood in drops on his forehead. We were just getting out of the cabriolet, when a hackney cab turned into the street. My companion's hawk's eye detected a woman in the depths of the vehicle. His face lighted up with a gleam of almost savage joy; he called to a little boy who was passing, and gave him his horse to hold. Then we went up to the old bill discounter.

"'M. Gobseck,' said I, 'I have brought one of my most intimate friends to see you (whom I trust as I would trust the Devil,' I added for the old man's private ear). 'To oblige me you will do your best for him (at the ordinary rate), and pull him out of his difficulty (if it suits your convenience).'

"M. de Trailles made his bow to Gobseck, took a seat, and listened to us with a courtier-like attitude; its charming humility would have touched your heart to see, but my Gobseck sits in his chair by the fireside without moving a muscle, or changing a feature. He looked very like the statue of Voltaire under the peristyle of the Théâtre-Français, as you see it of an evening; he had partly

risen as if to bow, and the skull cap that covered the top of his head, and the narrow strip of sallow forehead exhibited, completed his likeness to the man of marble.

"'I have no money to spare except for my own clients,' said he.

"'So you are cross because I may have tried in other quarters to ruin myself?' laughed the Count.

"'Ruin yourself!' repeated Gobseck ironically.

"'Were you about to remark that it is impossible to ruin a man who has nothing?' inquired the dandy. 'Why, I defy you to find a better *stock* in Paris!' he cried, swinging round on his heels.

"This half-earnest buffoonery produced not the slightest effect upon Gobseck.

"'Am I not on intimate terms with the Ronquerolles, the Marsays, the Franchessinis, the two Vandenesses, the Ajuda-Pintos,—all the most fashionable young men in Paris, in short? A prince and an ambassador (you know them both) are my partners at play. I draw my revenues from London and Carlsbad and Baden and Bath. Is not this the most brilliant of all industries!'

"'True.'

"'You make a sponge of me, begad! you do. You encourage me to go and swell myself out in society, so that you can squeeze me when I am hard up; but you yourselves are sponges just as I am, and death will give you a squeeze some day.'

"'That is possible.'

"'If there were no spendthrifts, what would become of you? The pair of us are like soul and body.'

"'Precisely so.'

"'Come, now, give us your hand, Grandaddy Gobseck, and be magnanimous if this is 'true' and 'possible' and 'precisely so.'"

"'You come to me,' the usurer answered coldly, 'because Girard, Palma, Werbrust, and Gigonnet are full up of your paper; they are offering it at a loss of fifty per cent.; and as it is likely they only gave you half the figure on the face of the bills, they are not worth five-and-twenty per cent. of their supposed value. I am your most obedient! Can I in common decency lend a stiver to a man who owes thirty thousand francs, and has not one farthing?' Gobseck continued. 'The day before yesterday you lost ten thousand francs at a ball at the Baron de Nucingen's.'

"'Sir,' said the Count, with rare impudence, 'my affairs are no concern of yours,' and he looked the old man up and down. 'A man has no debts till payment is due.'

"'True.'

"'My bills will be duly met.'

"'That is possible.'

"'And at this moment the question between you and me is simply whether the security I am going to offer is sufficient for the sum I have come to borrow.'

"'Precisely.'

"A cab stopped at the door, and the sound of wheels filled the room.

"'I will bring something directly which perhaps will satisfy you,' cried the young man, and he left the room.

"'Oh! my son,' exclaimed Gobseck, rising to his feet, and stretching out his arms to me, 'if he has good security, you have saved my life. It would be the death of me. Werbrust and Gigonnet imagined that they were going to

play off a trick on me; and now, thanks to you, I shall have a good laugh at their expense to-night.'

"There was something frightful about the old man's ecstasy. It was the one occasion when he opened his heart to me; and that flash of joy, swift though it was, will never be effaced from my memory.

"'Favor me so far as to stay here,' he added. 'I am armed, and a sure shot. I have gone tiger-hunting, and fought on the deck when there was nothing for it but to win or die; but I don't care to trust yonder elegant scoundrel.'

"He sat down again in his armchair before his bureau, and his face grew pale and impassive as before.

"'Ah!' he continued, turning to me, 'you will see that lovely creature I once told you about; I can hear a fine lady's step in the corridor; it is she, no doubt;' and, as a matter of fact, the young man came in with a woman on his arm. I recognized the Countess, whose levee Gobseck had described for me, one of old Goriot's two daughters.

"The Countess did not see me at first; I stayed where I was in the window bay, with my face against the pane; but I saw her give Maxime a suspicious glance as she came into the money-lander's damp, dark room. So beautiful she was, that in spite of her faults I felt sorry for her. There was a terrible storm of anguish in her heart; her haughty, proud features were drawn and distorted with pain which she strove in vain to disguise. The young man had come to be her evil genius. I admired Gobseck, whose perspicacity had foreseen their future four years ago at the first bill which she indorsed.

"'Probably,' said I to myself, 'this monster with the angel's face controls every possible spring of action in her: rules her through vanity, jealousy, pleasure, and the current of life in the world.'"

The Vicomtesse de Grandlieu broke in on the story.

"Why, the woman's very virtues have been turned against her," she exclaimed. "He has made her shed tears of devotion, he has brought out the utmost natural generosity of woman, and then abused her kindness and made her pay very dearly for unhallowed bliss."

Derville did not understand the signs which Mme. de Grandlieu made to him.

"I confess," he said, "that I had no inclination to shed tears over the lot of this unhappy creature, so brilliant in society, so repulsive to eyes that could read her heart; I shuddered rather at the sight of her murderer, a young angel with such a clear brow, such red lips and white teeth, such a winning smile. There they stood before their judge, he scrutinizing them much as some old fifteenth-century Dominican inquisitor might have peered into the dungeons of the Holy Office while the torture was administered to two Moors.

"The Countess spoke tremulously. 'Sir,' she said, 'is there any way of obtaining the value of these diamonds, and of keeping the right of repurchase?' She held out a jewel-case.

"'Yes, madame,' I put in, and came forward.

"She looked at me, and a shudder ran through her as she recognized me, and gave me the glance which means, 'Say nothing of this,' all the world over.

"'This,' said I, 'constitutes a sale with

faculty of redemption, as it is called, a formal agreement to transfer and deliver over a piece of property, either real estate or personalty, for a given time, on the expiry of which the previous owner recovers his title to the property in question, upon payment of a stipulated sum.'

"She breathed more freely. The Count looked black; he had grave doubts whether Gobseck would lend very much on the diamonds after such a fall in their value. Gobseck, impassive as ever, had taken up his magnifying glass, and was quietly scrutinizing the jewels. If I were to live for a hundred years, I should never forget the sight of his face at that moment. There was a flush in his pale cheeks; his eyes seemed to have caught the sparkle of the stones, for there was an unnatural glitter in them. He rose and went to the light, holding the diamonds close to his toothless mouth, as if he meant to devour them; mumbling vague words over them, holding up bracelets, sprays, necklaces, and tiaras one after another, to judge of their water, whiteness, and cutting; taking them out of the jewel-case and putting them in again, letting the play of the light bring out all their fires. He was more like a child than an old man; or, rather, childhood and dotage seemed to meet in him.

"'Fine stones! The set would have fetched three hundred thousand francs before the Revolution. What water! Genuine Asiatic diamonds from Golconda or Visapur. Do you know what they are worth? No, no; no one in Paris but Gobseck can appreciate them. In the time of the Empire such a set would have cost another two hundred thousand francs!'

"He gave a disgusted shrug, and added—

"'But now diamonds are going down in value every day. The Brazilians have swamped the market with them since the Peace; but the Indian stones are a better color. Others wear them now besides court ladies. Does madame go to court?'

"While he flung out these terrible words, he examined one stone after another with delight which no words can describe.

"'Flawless!' he said. 'Here is a speck! . . . here is a flaw! . . . A fine stone that!'

"His haggard face was so lighted up by the sparkling jewels, that it put me in mind of a dingy old mirror, such as you see in country inns. The glass receives every luminous image without reflecting the light, and a traveler bold enough to look for his face in it beholds a man in an apoplectic fit.

"'Well?' asked the Count, clapping Gobseck on the shoulder.

"The old boy trembled. He put down his playthings on his bureau, took his seat, and was a money-lender once more —hard, cold, and polished as a marble column.

"'How much do you want?'

"'One hundred thousand francs for three years,' said the Count.

"'That is possible,' said Gobseck, and from a mahogany box (Gobseck's jewel-case) he drew out a faultlessly adjusted pair of scales!

"He weighed the diamonds, calculating the value of stones and setting at sight (Heaven knows how!), delight and se-

verity struggling in the expression of his face the meanwhile. The Countess was plunged in a kind of stupor; to me, watching her, it seemed that she was fathoming the depths of the abyss into which she had fallen. There was remorse still left in that woman's soul. Perhaps a hand held out in human charity might save her. I would try.

"'Are the diamonds your personal property, madame?' I asked in a clear voice.

"'Yes, monsieur,' she said, looking at me with proud eyes.

"'Make out the deed of purchase with power of redemption, chatterbox,' said Gobseck to me, resigning his chair at the bureau in my favor.

"'Madame is without doubt a married woman?' I tried again.

"She nodded abruptly.

"'Then I will not draw up the deed,' said I.

"'And why not?' asked Gobseck.

"'Why not?' echoed I, as I drew the old man into the bay window so as to speak inside with him. 'Why not? This woman is under her husband's control; the agreement would be void in law; you could not possibly assert your ignorance of a fact recorded on the very face of the document itself. You would be compelled at once to produce the diamonds deposited with you, according to the weight, value, and cutting therein described.'

"Gobseck cut me short with a nod, and turned towards the guilty couple.

"'He is right!' he said. 'That puts the whole thing in a different light. Eighty thousand francs down, and you leave the diamonds with me,' he added, in the husky, flute-like voice. 'In the way of property, possession is as good as a title.'

"'But——' objected the young man.

"'You can take it or leave it,' continued Gobseck, returning the jewel-case to the lady as he spoke.

"'I have too many risks to run.'

"'It would be better to throw yourself at your husband's feet,' I bent to whisper in her ear.

"The usurer doubtless knew what I was saying from the movement of my lips. He gave me a cool glance. The Count's face grew livid. The Countess was visibly wavering. Maxime stepped up to her, and, low as he spoke, I could catch the words—

"'Adieu, dear Anastasie, may you be happy! As for me, by to-morrow my troubles will be over.'

"'Sir!' cried the lady, turning to Gobseck, 'I accept your offer.'

"'Come, now,' returned Gobseck. 'You have been a long time in coming to it, my fair lady.'

"He wrote out a cheque for fifty thousand francs on the Bank of France, and handed it to the Countess.

"'Now,' continued he with a smile, such a smile as you will see in portraits of M. Voltaire, 'now I will give you the rest of the amount in bills, thirty thousand francs' worth of paper as good as bullion. This gentleman here has just said, "My bills will be met when they are due,"' added he, producing certain drafts bearing the Count's signature, all protested the day before at the request of some of the confraternity, who had probably made them over to him (Gobseck) at a considerably reduced figure.

"The young man growled out something, in which the words 'Old scoun-

drel!' were audible. Daddy Gobseck did not move an eyebrow. He drew a pair of pistols out of a pigeon-hole, remarking coolly—

"'As the insulted man, I fire first.'

"'Maxime, you owe this gentleman an explanation,' cried the trembling Countess in a low voice.

"'I had no intention of giving offense,' stammered Maxime.

"'I am quite sure of that,' Gobseck answered calmly; 'you had no intention of meeting your bills, that was all.'

"The Countess rose, bowed, and vanished, with a great dread gnawing her, I doubt not. M. de Trailles was bound to follow, but before he went he managed to say—

"'If either of you gentlemen should forget himself, I will have his blood, or he will have mine.'

"'Amen!' called Daddy Gobseck as he put his pistols back in their place; 'but a man must have blood in his veins though before he can risk it, my son, and you have nothing but mud in yours.'

"When the door was closed, and the two vehicles had gone, Gobseck rose to his feet and began to prance about.

"'I have the diamonds! I have the diamonds!' he cried again and again, 'the beautiful diamonds! such diamonds! and tolerably cheaply. Aha! aha! Werbrust and Gigonnet, you thought you had old Papa Gobseck! *Ego sum papa!* I am master of the lot of you! Paid! paid, principal and interest! How silly they will look to-night when I shall come out with this story between two games of dominos!'

"The dark glee, the savage ferocity aroused by the possession of a few water-white pebbles, set me shuddering. I was dumb with amazement.

"'Aha! There you are, my boy!' said he. 'We will dine together. We will have some fun at your place, for I haven't a home of my own, and these restaurants, with their broths, and sauces, and wines, would poison the Devil himself.'

"Something in my face suddenly brought back the usual cold, impassive expression to his.

"'You don't understand it,' he said, and sitting down by the hearth, he put a tin saucepan full of milk on the brazier.—'Will you breakfast with me?' continued he. 'Perhaps there will be enough here for two.'

"'Thanks,' said I, 'I do not breakfast till noon.'

"I had scarcely spoken before hurried footsteps sounded from the passage. The stranger stopped at Gobseck's door and rapped; there was that in the knock which suggested a man transported with rage. Gobseck reconnoitered him through the grating; then he opened the door, and in came a man of thirty-five or so, judged harmless apparently in spite of his anger. The newcomer, who was quite plainly dressed, bore a strong resemblance to the late Duc de Richelieu. You must often have met him, he was the Countess's husband, a man with the aristocratic figure (permit the expression to pass) peculiar to statesmen of your Faubourg.

"'Sir,' said this person, addressing himself to Gobseck, who had quite recovered his tranquillity, 'did my wife go out of this house just now?'

"'That is possible.'

"'Well, sir? do you not take my meaning?'

"'I have not the honor of the acquaintance of my lady your wife,' returned Gobseck. 'I have had a good many visitors this morning, women and men, and mannish young ladies, and young gentlemen who look like young ladies. I should find it very hard to say——"

"'A truce to jesting, sir! I mean the woman who has this moment gone out from you.'

"'How can I know whether she is your wife or not? I never had the pleasure of seeing you before.'

"'You are mistaken, M. Gobseck,' said the Count, with profound irony in his voice. 'We have met before, one morning in my wife's bedroom. You had come to demand payment for a bill—no bill of hers.'

"'It was no business of mine to inquire what value she had received for it,' said Gobseck, with a malignant look at the Count. 'I had come by the bill in the way of business. At the same time, monsieur,' continued Gobseck, quietly pouring coffee into his bowl of milk, without a trace of excitement or hurry in his voice, 'you will permit me to observe that your right to enter my house and expostulate with me is far from proven to my mind. I came of age in the sixty-first year of the preceding century.'

"'Sir,' said the Count, 'you have just bought family diamonds, which do not belong to my wife, for a mere trifle.'

"'Without feeling it incumbent upon me to tell you my private affairs, I will tell you this much, M. le Comte—if Mme. la Comtesse has taken your diamonds, you should have sent a circular round to all the jewelers, giving them notice not to buy them; she might have sold them separately.'

"'You know my wife, sir!' roared the Count.

"'True.'

"'She is in her husband's power.'

"'That is possible.'

"'She had no right to dispose of those diamonds——'

"'Precisely.'

"'Very well, sir?'

"'Very well, sir. I knew your wife, and she is in her husband's power; I am quite willing, she is in the power of a good many people; but—I—do—*not*—know—your diamonds. If Mme. la Comtesse can put her name to a bill, she can go into business of course, and buy and sell diamonds on her own account. The thing is plain on the face of it!'

"'Good-day, sir!' cried the Count, now white with rage. 'There are courts of justice.'

"'Quite so.'

"'This gentleman here,' he added, indicating me, 'was a witness of the sale.'

"'That is possible.'

"The Count turned to go. Feeling the gravity of the affair, I suddenly put in between the two belligerents.

"'M. le Comte,' said I, 'you are right, and M. Gobseck is by no means in the wrong. You could not prosecute the purchaser without bringing your wife into court, and the whole of the odium would not fall on her. I am an attorney, and I owe it to myself, and still more to my professional position, to declare that the diamonds of which you speak were purchased by M. Gobseck in my

presence; but, in my opinion, it would be unwise to dispute the legality of the sale, especially as the goods are not readily recognizable. In equity your contention would lie, in law it would collapse. M. Gobseck is too honest a man to deny that the sale was a profitable transaction, more especially as my conscience, no less than my duty, compels me to make the admission. But once bring the case into a court of law, M. le Comte, the issue would be doubtful. My advice to you is to come to terms with M. Gobseck, who can plead that he bought the diamonds in all good faith; you would be bound in any case to return the purchase-money. Consent to an arrangement, with power to redeem at the end of seven or eight months, or a year even, or any convenient lapse of time, for the repayment of the sum borrowed by Mme. la Comtesse, unless you would prefer to repurchase them outright and give security for repayment.'

"Gobseck dipped his bread into the bowl of coffee, and ate with perfect indifference; but at the words 'come to terms,' he looked at me as who should say, 'A fine fellow that! he has learned something from my lessons!' And I, for my part, riposted with a glance, which he understood uncommonly well. The business was dubious and shady; there was pressing need of coming to terms. Gobseck could not deny all knowledge of it, for I should appear as a witness. The Count thanked me with a smile of goodwill.

"In the debate which followed, Gobseck showed greed enough and skill enough to baffle a whole congress of diplomatists; but in the end I drew up an instrument, in which the Count acknowledged the receipt of eighty-five thousand francs, interest included, in consideration of which Gobseck undertook to return the diamonds to the Count.

"'What waste!' exclaimed he as he put his signature to the agreement. 'How is it possible to bridge such a gulf?'

"'Have you many children, sir?' Gobseck asked gravely.

"The Count winced at the question; it was as if the old money-lender, like an experienced physician, had put his finger at once on the sore spot. The Comtesse's husband did not reply.

"'Well,' said Gobseck, taking the pained silence for answer, 'I know your story by heart. The woman is a fiend, but perhaps you love her still; I can well believe it; she made an impression on me. Perhaps, too, you would rather save your fortune, and keep it for one or two of your children? Well, fling yourself into the whirlpool of society, lose that fortune at play, come to Gobseck pretty often. The world will say that I am a Jew, a Tartar, a usurer, a pirate, will say that I have ruined you! I snap my fingers at them! If anybody insults me, I lay my man out; nobody is a surer shot nor handles a rapier better than your servant. And everyone knows it. Then, have a friend—if you can find one—and make over your property to him by a fictitious sale. You call that a *fidei commissum,* don't you?' he asked, turning to me.

"The Count seemed to be entirely absorbed in his own thoughts.

"'You shall have your money to-morrow,' he said, 'have the diamonds in readiness,' and he went.

"'There goes one who looks to me to be as stupid as an honest man,' Gobseck said coolly when the Count had gone.

"'Say rather stupid as a man of passionate nature.'

"'The Count owes you your fee for drawing up the agreement!' Gobseck called after me as I took my leave.

"One morning, a few days after the scene which initiated me into the terrible depths beneath the surface of the life of a woman of fashion, the Count came into my private office.

"'I have come to consult you on a matter of grave moment,' he said, 'and I begin by telling you that I have perfect confidence in you, as I hope to prove to you. Your behavior to Mme. de Grandlieu is above all praise,' the Count went on. (You see, madame, that you have paid me a thousand times over for a very simple matter.)

"I bowed respectfully, and replied that I had done nothing but the duty of an honest man.

"'Well,' the Count went on, 'I have made a great many inquiries about the singular personage to whom you owe your position. And from all that I can learn, Gobseck is a philosopher of the Cynic school. What do you think of his probity?'

"'M. le Comte,' said I, 'Gobseck is my benefactor—at fifteen per cent.,' I added, laughing. 'But his avarice does not authorize me to paint him to the life for a stranger's benefit.'

"'Speak out, sir. Your frankness cannot injure Gobseck or yourself. I do not expect to find an angel in a pawnbroker.'

"'Daddy Gobseck,' I began, 'is intimately convinced of the truth of the principle which he takes for a rule of life. In his opinion, money is a commodity which you may sell cheap or dear, according to circumstances, with a clear conscience. A capitalist, by charging a high rate of interest, becomes in his eyes a secured partner by anticipation in the profits of a paying concern or speculation. Apart from the peculiar philosophical views of human nature and financial principles, which enable him to behave like a usurer, I am fully persuaded that, out of his business, he is the most loyal and upright soul in Paris. There are two men in him; he is petty and great—a miser and a philosopher. If I were to die and leave a family behind me, he would be the guardian whom I should appoint. This was how I came to see Gobseck in this light, monsieur. I know nothing of his past life. He may have been a pirate, may, for anything I know, have been all over the world, trafficking in diamonds, or men, or women, or State secrets; but this I affirm of him—never has human soul been more thoroughly tempered and tried. When I paid off my loan, I asked him, with a little circumlocution of course, how it was that he had made me pay such an exorbitant rate of interest; and why, seeing that I was a friend, and he meant to do me a kindness, he should not have yielded to the wish and made it complete.—"My son," he said, "I released you from all need to feel any gratitude by giving you ground for the belief that you owed me nothing.—So we are the best friends in the world." That answer, monsieur, gives you the man better than any amount of description.'

"'I have made up my mind once and

for all,' said the Count. 'Draw up the necessary papers; I am going to transfer my property to Gobseck. I have no one but you to trust to in the draft of the counter-deed, which will declare that this transfer is a simulated sale, and that Gobseck as trustee will administer my estate (as he knows how to administer), and undertakes to make over my fortune to my eldest son when he comes of age. Now, sir, this I must tell you: I should be afraid to have that precious document in my own keeping. My boy is so fond of his mother, that I cannot trust him with it. So dare I beg of you to keep it for me? In case of death, Gobseck would make you legatee of my property. Every contingency is provided for.'

"The Count paused for a moment. He seemed greatly agitated.

"'A thousand pardons,' he said at length; 'I am in great pain, and have very grave misgivings as to my health. Recent troubles have disturbed me very painfully, and forced me to take this great step.'

"'Allow me first to thank you, monsieur,' said I, 'for the trust you place in me. But I am bound to deserve it by pointing out to you that you are disinheriting your—other children. They bear your name. Merely as the children of a once-loved wife, now fallen from her position, they have a claim to an assured existence. I tell you plainly that I cannot accept the trust with which you propose to honor me unless their future is secured.'

"The Count trembled violently at the words, and tears came into his eyes as he grasped my hand, saying, 'I did not know my man thoroughly. You have made me both glad and sorry. We will make provision for the children in the counter-deed.'

"I went with him to the door; it seemed to me that there was a glow of satisfaction in his face at the thought of this act of justice.

"Now, Camille, this is how a young wife takes the first step to the brink of a precipice. A quadrille, a ballad, a picnic party is sometimes cause sufficient of frightful evils. You are hurried on by the presumptuous voice of vanity and pride, on the faith of a smile or through giddiness and folly! Shame and misery and remorse are the three Furies awaiting every woman the moment she oversteps the limits——"

"Poor Camille can hardly keep awake," the Vicomtesse hastily broke in.—"Go to bed, child; you have no need of appalling pictures to keep you pure in heart and conduct."

Camille de Grandlieu took the hint and went.

"You were going rather too far, dear M. Derville," said the Vicomtesse, "an attorney is not a mother of daughters nor yet a preacher."

"But any newspaper is a thousand times——"

"Poor Derville!" exclaimed the Vicomtesse, "what has come over you? Do you really imagine that I allow a daughter of mine to read the newspapers!—Go on," she added after a pause.

"Three months after everything was signed and sealed between the Count and Gobseck——"

"You can call him the Comte de Restaud, now that Camille is not here," said the Vicomtesse.

"So be it! Well, time went by, and I saw nothing of the counter-deed, which by rights should have been in my hands. An attorney in Paris lives in such a whirl of business that, with certain exceptions which we make for ourselves, we have not the time to give each individual client the amount of interest which he himself takes in his affairs. Still, one day when Gobseck came to dine with me, I asked him as we left the table if he knew how it was that I had heard no more of M. de Restaud.

"'There are excellent reasons for that,' he said; 'the noble Count is at death's door. He is one of the soft stamp that cannot learn how to put an end to chagrin, and allow it to wear them out instead. Life is a craft, a profession; every man must take the trouble to learn that business. When he has learned what life is by dint of painful experiences, the fiber of him is toughened, and acquires a certain elasticity, so that he has his sensibilities under his own control; he disciplines himself till his nerves are like steel springs, which always bend, but never break; given a sound digestion, and a man in such training ought to live as long as the cedars of Lebanon, and famous trees they are.'

"'Then is the Count actually dying?' I asked.

"'That is possible,' said Gobseck; 'the winding up of his estate will be a juicy bit of business for you.'

"I looked at my man, and said, by way of sounding him—

"'Just explain to me how it is that we, the Count and I, are the only men in whom you take an interest?'

"'Because you are the only two who have trusted me without finessing,' he said.

"Although this answer warranted my belief that Gobseck would act fairly even if the counter-deed were lost, I resolved to go to see the Count. I pleaded a business engagement, and we separated.

"I went straight to the Rue du Helder, and was shown into a room where the Countess sat playing with her children. When she heard my name, she sprang up and came to meet me, then she sat down and pointed without a word to a chair by the fire. Her face wore the inscrutable mask beneath which women of the world conceal their most vehement emotions. Trouble had withered that face already. Nothing of its beauty now remained, save the marvelous outlines in which its principal charm had lain.

"'It is essential, madame, that I should speak to M. le Comte——'

"'If so, you would be more favored than I am,' she said, interrupting me. 'M. de Restaud will see no one. He will hardly allow his doctor to come, and will not be nursed even by me. When people are ill, they have such strange fancies! They are like children, they do not know what they want.'

"'Perhaps, like children, they know very well what they want.'

"The Countess reddened. I almost repented a thrust worthy of Gobseck. So, by way of changing the conversation, I added, 'But M. de Restaud cannot possibly lie there alone all day, madame.'

"'His oldest boy is with him,' she said.

"It was useless to gaze at the Countess; she did not blush this time, and it looked to me as if she were resolved more firmly than ever that I should not penetrate into her secrets.

"'You must understand, madame, that my proceeding is no way indiscreet. It is strongly to his interest——' I bit my lips, feeling that I had gone the wrong way to work. The Countess immediately took advantage of my slip.

"'My interests are in no way separate from my husband's, sir,' said she. 'There is nothing to prevent your addressing yourself to me——'

"'The business which brings me here concerns no one but M. le Comte,' I said firmly.

"'I will let him know of your wish to see him.'

"The civil tone and expression assumed for the occasion did not impose upon me; I divined that she would never allow me to see her husband. I chatted on about indifferent matters for a little while, so as to study her; but, like all women who have once begun to plot for themselves, she could dissimulate with the rare perfection which, in your sex, means the last degree of perfidy. If I may dare to say it, I looked for anything from her, even a crime. She produced this feeling in me, because it was so evident from her manner and in all that she did or said, down to the very inflections of her voice, that she had an eye to the future. I went.

"Now I will pass on to the final scenes of this adventure, throwing in a few circumstances brought to light by time, and some details guessed by Gobseck's perspicacity or by my own.

"When the Comte de Restaud apparently plunged into the vortex of dissipation, something passed between the husband and wife, something which remains an impenetrable secret, but the wife sank even lower in the husband's eyes. As soon as he became so ill that he was obliged to take to his bed, he manifested his aversion for the Countess and the two youngest children. He forbade them to enter his room, and any attempt to disobey his wishes brought on such dangerous attacks that the doctor implored the Countess to submit to her husband's wish.

"Mme. de Restaud had seen the family estates and property, nay, the very mansion in which she lived, pass into the hands of Gobseck, who appeared to play the fantastic part of ogre so far as their wealth was concerned. She partially understood what her husband was doing, no doubt. M. de Trailles was traveling in England (his creditors had been a little too pressing of late), and no one else was in a position to enlighten the lady, and explain that her husband was taking precautions against her at Gobseck's suggestion. It is said that she held out for a long while before she gave the signature required by French law for the sale of the property; nevertheless the Count gained his point. The Countess was convinced that her husband was realizing his fortune, and that somewhere or other there would be a little bunch of notes representing the amount; they had been deposited with a notary, or perhaps at the Bank, or in some safe hiding-place. Following out her train of thought, it was evident that M. de Restaud must of necessity have some kind of document in his possession by which any remaining property could be recovered and handed over to his son.

"So she made up her mind to keep the strictest possible watch over the sick-room. She ruled despotically in the house, and everything in it was sub-

mitted to this feminine espionage. All day she sat in the salon adjoining her husband's room, so that she could hear every syllable that he uttered, every least movement that he made. She had a bed put there for her of a night, but she did not sleep very much. The doctor was entirely in her interests. Such wifely devotion seemed praiseworthy enough. With the natural subtlety of perfidy, she took care to disguise M. de Restaud's repugnance for her, and feigned distress so perfectly that she gained a sort of celebrity. Strait-laced women were even found to say that she had expiated her sins. Always before her eyes she beheld a vision of the destitution to follow on the Count's death if her presence of mind should fail her; and in these ways the wife, repulsed from the bed of pain on which her husband lay and groaned, had drawn a charmed circle round about it. So near, yet kept at a distance; all-powerful, but in disgrace, the apparently devoted wife was lying in wait for death and opportunity; crouching like the ant-lion at the bottom of his spiral pit, ever on the watch for the prey that cannot escape, listening to the fall of every grain of sand.

"The strictest censor could not but recognize that the Countess pushed maternal sentiment to the last degree. Her father's death had been a lesson to her, people said. She worshiped her children. They were so young that she could hide the disorders of her life from their eyes, and could win their love; she had given them the best and most brilliant education. I confess that I cannot help admiring her and feeling sorry for her. Gobseck used to joke me about it. Just about that time she had discovered Maxime's baseness, and was expiating the sins of the past in tears of blood. I am sure of it. Hateful as were the measures which she took for regaining control of her husband's money, were they not the result of a mother's love, and a desire to repair the wrongs she had done her children? And again, it may be, like many a woman who has experienced the storms of lawless love, she felt a longing to lead a virtuous life again. Perhaps she only learned the worth of that life when she came to reap the woeful harvest sown by her errors.

"Every time that little Ernest came out of his father's room, she put him through a searching examination as to all that his father had done or said. The boy willingly complied with his mother's wishes, and told her even more than she asked in her anxious affection, as he thought.

"My visit was a ray of light for the Countess. She was determined to see in me the instrument of the Count's vengeance, and resolved that I should not be allowed to go near the dying man. I augured ill of all this, and earnestly wished for an interview, for I was not easy in my mind about the fate of the counter-deed. If it should fall into the Countess's hands, she might turn it to her own account, and that would be the beginning of a series of interminable lawsuits between her and Gobseck. I knew the usurer well enough to feel convinced that he would never give up the property to her; there was room for plenty of legal quibbling over a series of transfers, and I alone knew all the ins and outs of the matter. I was minded to prevent such a tissue of

misfortune, so I went to the Countess a second time.

"I have noticed, madame," said Derville, turning to the Vicomtesse, and speaking in a confidential tone, "certain moral phenomena to which we do not pay enough attention. I am naturally an observer of human nature, and instinctively I bring a spirit of analysis to the business that I transact in the interest of others, when human passions are called into lively play. Now, I have often noticed, and always with new wonder, that two antagonists almost always divine each other's inmost thoughts and ideas. Two enemies sometimes possess a power of clear insight into mental processes, and read each other's minds as two lovers read in either soul. So when we came together, the Countess and I, I understood at once the reason of her antipathy for me, disguised though it was by the most gracious forms of politeness and civility. I had been forced to be her confidant, and a woman cannot but hate the man before whom she is compelled to blush. And she on her side knew that if I was the man in whom her husband placed confidence, that husband had not as yet given up his fortune.

"I will spare you the conversation, but it abides in my memory as one of the most dangerous encounters in my career. Nature had bestowed on her all the qualities which, combined, are irresistibly fascinating; she could be pliant and proud by turns, and confiding and coaxing in her manner; she even went so far as to try to arouse curiosity and kindle love in her effort to subjugate me. It was a failure. As I took my leave of her, I caught a gleam of hate and rage in her eyes that made me shudder. We parted enemies. She would fain have crushed me out of existence; and for my own part, I felt pity for her, and for some natures pity is the deadliest of insults. This feeling pervaded the last representations I put before her; and when I left her, I left, I think, dread in the depths of her soul, by declaring that, turn which way she would, ruin lay inevitably before her.

"'If I were to see M. le Comte, your children's property at any rate would——'

"'I should be at your mercy,' she said, breaking in upon me, disgust in her gesture.

"Now that we had spoken frankly, I made up my mind to save the family from impending destitution. I resolved to strain the law at need to gain my ends, and this was what I did. I sued the Comte de Restaud for a sum of money, ostensibly due to Gobseck, and gained judgment. The Countess, of course, did not allow him to know of this, but I had gained my point, I had a right to affix seals to everything on the death of the Count. I bribed one of the servants in the house—the man undertook to let me know at any hour of the day or night if his master should be at the point of death, so that I could intervene at once, scare the Countess with a threat of affixing seals, and so secure the counter-deed.

"I learned later on that the woman was studying the Code, with her husband's dying moans in her ears. If we could picture the thoughts of those who stand about a deathbed, what fearful sights should we not see? Money is always the motive-spring of the schemes elaborated, of all the plans that are

made and the plots that are woven about it! Let us leave these details, nauseating in the nature of them; but perhaps they may have given you some insight into all that this husband and wife endured; perhaps too they may unveil much that is passing in secret in other houses.

"For two months the Comte de Restaud lay on his bed, alone, and resigned to his fate. Mortal disease was slowly sapping the strength of mind and body. Unaccountable and grotesque sick fancies preyed upon him; he would not suffer them to set his room in order, no one should nurse him, he would not even allow them to make his bed. All his surroundings bore the marks of this last degree of apathy, the furniture was out of place, the daintiest trifles were covered with dust and cobwebs. In health he had been a man of refined and expensive tastes, now he positively delighted in the comfortless look of the room. A host of objects required in illness—rows of medicine bottles, empty and full, most of them dirty, crumpled linen and broken plates, littered the writing-table, chairs, and chimney-piece. An open warming-pan lay on the floor before the grate; a bath, still full of mineral water, had not been taken away. The sense of coming dissolution pervaded all the details of an unsightly chaos. Signs of death appeared in things inanimate before the Destroyer came to the body on the bed. The Comte de Restaud could not bear the daylight, the Venetian shutters were closed, darkness deepened the gloom in the dismal chamber. The sick man himself had wasted greatly. All the life in him seemed to have taken refuge in the still brilliant eyes. The livid whiteness of his face was something horrible to see, enhanced as it was by the long dank locks of hair that struggled along his cheeks, for he would never suffer them to cut it. He looked like some religious fanatic in the desert. Mental suffering was extinguishing all human instincts in this man of scarce fifty years of age, whom all Paris had known as so brilliant and so successful.

"One morning at the beginning of December 1824, he looked up at Ernest, who sat at the foot of his bed gazing at his father with wistful eyes.

"'Are you in pain?' the little Vicomte asked.

"'No,' said the Count, with a ghastly smile, 'it all lies *here and about my heart!*'

"He pointed to his forehead, and then laid his wasted fingers on his hollow chest. Ernest began to cry at the sight

"'How is it that M. Derville does not come to me?' the Count asked his servant (he thought that Maurice was really attached to him, but the man was entirely in the Countess's interest) —'What! Maurice!' and the dying man suddenly sat upright in his bed, and seemed to recover all his presence of mind, 'I have sent for my attorney seven or eight times during the last fortnight, and he does not come!' he cried. 'Do you imagine that I am to be trifled with? Go for him, at once, this very instant, and bring him back with you. If you do not carry out my orders, I shall get up and go myself.'

"'Madame,' said the man as he came into the salon, 'you heard M. le Comte; what ought I to do?'

"'Pretend to go to the attorney, and when you come back, tell your master

that his man of business is forty leagues away from Paris on an important lawsuit. Say that he is expected back at the end of the week.—Sick people never know how ill they are,' thought the Countess; 'he will wait till the man comes home.'

"The doctor had said on the previous evening that the Count could scarcely live through the day. When the servant came back two hours later to give that hopeless answer, the dying man seemed to be greatly agitated.

"'O God!' he cried again and again, 'I put my trust in none but Thee.'

"For a long while he lay and gazed at his son, and spoke in a feeble voice at last.

"'Ernest, my boy, you are very young; but you have a good heart; you can understand, no doubt, that a promise given to a dying man is sacred; a promise to a father. . . . Do you feel that you can be trusted with a secret, and keep it so well and closely that even your mother herself shall not know that you have a secret to keep? There is no one else in this house whom I can trust to-day. You will not betray my trust, will you?'

"'No, father.'

"'Very well, then, Ernest, in a minute or two I will give you a sealed packet that belongs to M. Derville; you must take such care of it that no one can know that you have it; then you must slip out of the house and put the letter into the post-box at the corner.'

"'Yes, father.'

"'Can I depend upon you?'

"'Yes, father.'

"'Come and kiss me. You have made death less bitter to me, dear boy. In six or seven years' time you will understand the importance of this secret, and you will be well rewarded then for your quickness and obedience, you will know then how much I love you. Leave me alone for a minute, and let no one—no matter whom—come in meanwhile.'

"Ernest went out and saw his mother standing in the next room.

"'Ernest,' said she, 'come here.'

"She sat down, drew her son to her knees, and clasped him in her arms, and held him tightly to her heart.

"'Ernest, your father said something to you just now.'

"'Yes, mamma.'

"'What did he say?'

"'I cannot repeat it, mamma.'

"'Oh, my dear child!' cried the Countess, kissing him in rapture. 'You have kept your secret; how glad that makes me! Never tell a lie; never fail to keep your word—those are two principles which should never be forgotten.'

"'Oh! mamma, how beautiful you are! *You* have never told a lie, I am quite sure.'

"'Once or twice, Ernest dear, I have lied. Yes, and I have not kept my word under circumstances which speak louder than all precepts. Listen, my Ernest, you are big enough and intelligent enough to see that your father drives me away, and will not allow me to nurse him, and this is not natural, for you know how much I love him.'

"'Yes, mamma.'

"The Countess began to cry. 'Poor child!' she said, 'this misfortune is the result of treacherous insinuations. Wicked people have tried to separate me from your father to satisfy their greed. They mean to take all our money from

us and keep it for themselves. If your father were well, the division between us would soon be over; he would listen to me; he is loving and kind; he would see his mistake. But now his mind is affected, and his prejudices against me have become a fixed idea, a sort of mania with him. It is one result of his illness. Your father's fondness for you is another proof that his mind is deranged. Until he fell ill you never noticed that he loved you more than Pauline and Georges. It is all caprice with him now. In his affection for you he might take it into his head to tell you to do things for him. If you do not want to ruin us all, my darling, and to see your mother begging her bread like a pauper woman, you must tell her everything——'

"'Ah!' cried the Count. He had opened the door and stood there, a sudden, half-naked apparition, almost as thin and fleshless as a skeleton.

"His smothered cry produced a terrible effect upon the Countess; she sat motionless, as if a sudden stupor had seized her. Her husband was as white and wasted as if he had risen out of his grave.

"'You have filled my life to the full with trouble, and now you are trying to vex my deathbed, to warp my boy's mind, and make a depraved man of him!' he cried hoarsely.

The Countess flung herself at his feet. His face, working with the last emotions of life, was almost hideous to see.

"'Mercy! mercy!' she cried aloud, shedding a torrent of tears.

"'Have you shown me any pity?' he asked. 'I allowed you to squander your own money, and now do you mean to squander my fortune, too, and ruin my son?'

"'Ah! well, yes, have no pity for me, be merciless to me!' she cried. 'But the children? Condemn your widow to live in a convent; I will obey you; I will do anything, anything that you bid me, to expiate the wrong I have done you, if that so the children may be happy! The children! Oh, the children!'

"'I have only one child,' said the Count, stretching out a wasted arm, in his despair, towards his son.

"'Pardon a penitent woman, a penitent woman! . . .' wailed the Countess her arms about her husband's damp feet. She could not speak for sobbing; vague, incoherent sounds broke from her parched throat.

"'You dare to talk of penitence after all that you have said to Ernest!' exclaimed the dying man, shaking off the Countess, who lay groveling over his feet. —'You turn me to ice!' he added, and there was something appalling in the indifference with which he uttered the words. 'You have been a bad daughter; you have been a bad wife; you will be a bad mother.'

"The wretched woman fainted away. The dying man reached his bed and lay down again, and a few hours later sank into unconsciousness. The priests came and administered the sacraments.

"At midnight he died; the scene that morning had exhausted his remaining strength, and on the stroke of midnight I arrived with Daddy Gobseck. The house was in confusion, and under cover of it we walked up into the little salon adjoining the death-chamber. The three children were there in tears, with two

priests, who had come to watch with the dead. Ernest came over to me, and said that his mother desired to be alone in the Count's room.

"'Do not go in,' he said; and I admired the child for his tone and gesture; 'she is praying there.'

"Gobseck began to laugh that soundless laugh of his, but I felt too much touched by the feeling in Ernest's little face to join in the miser's sardonic amusement. When Ernest saw that we moved towards the door, he planted himself in front of it, crying out, 'Mamma, here are some gentlemen in black who want to see you!'

"Gobseck lifted Ernest out of the way as if the child had been a feather, and opened the door.

"What a scene it was that met our eyes! The room was in frightful disorder; clothes and papers and rags lay tossed about in a confusion horrible to see in the presence of Death; and there, in the midst, stood the Countess in disheveled despair, unable to utter a word, her eyes glittering. The Count had scarcely breathed his last before his wife came in and forced open the drawers and the desk; the carpet was strewn with litter, some of the furniture and boxes were broken, the signs of violence could be seen everywhere. But if her search had at first proved fruitless, there was that in her excitement and attitude which led me to believe that she had found the mysterious documents at last. I glanced at the bed, and professional instinct told me all that had happened. The mattress had been flung contemptuously down by the bedside, and across it, face downwards, lay the body of the Count, like one of the paper envelopes that strewed the carpet—he too was nothing now but an envelope. There was something grotesquely horrible in the attitude of the stiffening rigid limbs.

"The dying man must have hidden the counter-deed under his pillow to keep it safe so long as life should last; and his wife must have guessed his thought; indeed, it might be read plainly in his last dying gesture, in the convulsive clutch of his claw-like hands. The pillow had been flung to the floor at the foot of the bed; I could see the print of her heel upon it. At her feet lay a paper with the Count's arms on the seals; I snatched it up, and saw that it was addressed to me. I looked steadily at the Countess with the pitiless clear-sightedness of an examining magistrate confronting a guilty creature. The contents were blazing in the grate; she had flung them on the fire at the sound of our approach, imagining, from a first hasty glance at the provisions which I had suggested for her children, that she was destroying a will which disinherited them. A tormented conscience and involuntary horror of the deed which she had done had taken away all power of reflection. She had been caught in the act, and possibly the scaffold was rising before her eyes, and she already felt the felon's branding iron.

"There she stood gasping for breath, waiting for us to speak, staring at us with haggard eyes.

"I went across to the grate and pulled out an unburned fragment. 'Ah, madame!' I exclaimed, 'you have ruined your children! Those papers were the titles to their property.'

"Her mouth twitched, she looked as if she were threatened by a paralytic seizure.

"'Eh! eh!' cried Gobseck; the harsh shrill tone grated upon our ears like the sound of a brass candlestick scratching a marble surface.

"There was a pause, then the old man turned to me and said quietly—

"'Do you intend Mme. la Comtesse to suppose that I am not the rightful owner of the property sold to me by her late husband? This house belongs to me now.'

"A sudden blow on the head from a bludgeon would have given me less pain and astonishment. The Countess saw the look of hesitation in my face.

"'Monsieur' she cried, 'Monsieur!' She could find no other words.

"'You are a trustee, are you not?' I asked.

"'That is possible.'

"'Then do you mean to take advantage of this crime of hers?'

"'Precisely.'

"I went at that, leaving the Countess sitting by her husband's bedside, shedding hot tears. Gobseck followed me. Outside in the street I separated from him, but he came after me, flung me one of those searching glances with whuch he probed men's minds, and said in the husky flute-tones, pitched in a shriller key—

"'Do you take it upon yourself to judge me?'

"From that time forward we saw little of each other. Gobseck let the Count's mansion on lease; he spent the summers on the country estate. He was lord of the manor in earnest, putting up farm buildings, repairing mills and roadways, and planting timber. I came across him one day in a walk in the Jardin des Tuileries.

"'The Countess is behaving like a heroine,' said I; 'she gives herself up entirely to the children's education; she is giving them a perfect bringing up. The oldest boy is a charming young fellow——'

"'That is possible.'

"'But ought you not to help Ernest?' I suggested.

"'Help him!' cried Gobseck. 'Not I. Adversity is the greatest of all teachers; adversity teaches us to know the value of money and the worth of men and women. Let him set sail on the seas of Paris; when he is a qualified pilot, we will give him a ship to steer.'

"I left him without seeking to explain the meaining of his words.

"M. de Restaud's mother has prejudiced him against me, and he is very far from taking me as his legal adviser; still, I went to see Gobseck last week to tell him about Ernest's love for Mlle. Camille, and pressed him to carry out his contract, since that young Restaud is just of age.

"I found that the old bill-discounter had been kept to his bed for a long time by the complaint of which he was to die. He put me off, saying that he would give the matter his attention when he could get up again and see after his business; his idea being no doubt that he would not give up any of his possessions so long as the breath was in him; no other reason could be found for his shuffling answer. He seemed to me to be much worse than he at all suspected. I stayed with him

long enough to discern the progress of a passion which age had converted into a sort of craze. He wanted to be alone in the house, and had taken the rooms one by one as they fell vacant. In his own room he had changed nothing; the furniture which I knew so well sixteen years ago looked the same as ever; it might have been kept under a glass case. Gobseck's faithful old portress, with her husband, a pensioner, who sat in the entry while she was upstairs, was still his housekeeper and charwoman, and now in addition his sick-nurse. In spite of his feebleness, Gobseck saw his clients himself as heretofore, and received sums of money; his affairs had been so simplified, that he only needed to send his pensioner out now and again on an errand, and could carry on business in his bed.

"After the treaty, by which France recognized the Haytian Republic, Gobseck was one of the members of the commission appointed to liquidate claims and assess repayments due by Hayti; his special knowledge of old fortunes in San Domingo, and the planters and their heirs and assigns to whom the indemnities were due, had led to his nomination. Gobseck's peculiar genius had then devised an agency for discounting the planters' claims on the government. The business was carried on under the names of Werbrust and Gigonnet, with whom he shared the spoil without disbursements, for his knowledge was accepted instead of capital. The agency was a sort of distillery, in which money was extracted from doubtful claims, and the claims of those who knew no better, or had no confidence in the government. As a liquidator, Gobseck could make terms with the large landed proprietors; and these, either to gain a higher percentage of their claims, or to insure prompt settlements, would send him presents in proportion to their means. In this way presents came to be a kind of percentage upon sums too large to pass through his control, while the agency bought up cheaply the small and dubious claims, or the claims of those persons who preferred a little ready money to a deferred and somewhat hazy repayment by the Republic. Gobseck was the insatiable boa constrictor of the great business. Every morning he received his tribute, eying it like a Nabob's prime minister, as he considers whether he will sign a pardon. Gobseck would take anything, from the present of game sent him by some poor devil or the pound's weight of wax candles from devout folk, to the rich man's plate and the speculator's gold snuff-box. Nobody knew what became of the presents sent to the old money-lender. Everything went in, but nothing came out.

"'On the word of an honest woman,' said the portress, an old acquaintance of mine, 'I believe he swallows it all and is none the fatter for it; he is as thin and dried up as the cuckoo in the clock.'

"At length, last Monday, Gobseck sent his pensioner for me. The man came up to my private office.

"'Be quick and come, M. Derville,' said he, 'the governor is just going to hand in his checks; he has grown as yellow as a lemon; he is fidgeting to speak with you; death has fair hold of him; the rattle is working in his throat.'

"When I entered Gobseck's room, I found the dying man kneeling before the grate. If there was no fire on the hearth, there was at any rate a monstrous heap of ashes. He had dragged himself out of bed, but his strength had failed him, and he could neither go back nor find voice to complain.

"'You felt cold, old friend,' I said, as I helped him back to his bed; 'how can you do without a fire?'

"'I am not cold at all,' he said. 'No fire here! no fire! I am going, I know not where, lad,' he went on, glancing at me with blank, lightless eyes, 'but I am going away from this.—I have *carpology,*' said he (the use of the technical term showing how clear and accurate his mental processes were even now). 'I thought the room was full of live gold, and I got up to catch some of it.—To whom will all mine go, I wonder? Not to the Crown; I have left a will, look for it, Grotius. *La belle Hollandaise* had a daughter; I once saw the girl somewhere or other, in the Rue Vivienne, one evening. They call her *"La Torpille,"* I believe; she is as pretty as pretty can be; look her up, Grotius. You are my executor; take what you like; help yourself. There are Strasburg pies, there, and bags of coffee, and sugar, and gold spoons. Give the Odiot service to your wife. But who is to have the diamonds? Are you going to take them, lad? There is snuff too—sell it at Hamburg, tobaccos are worth half as much again at Hamburg. All sorts of things I have in fact, and now I must go and leave them all.—Come Papa Gobseck, no weakness, be yourself!'

"He raised himself in bed, the lines of his face standing out as sharply against the pillow as if the profile had been cast in bronze; he stretched out a lean arm and bony hand along the coverlet and clutched it, as if so he would fain keep his hold on life, then he gazed hard at the grate, cold as his own metallic eyes, and died in full consciousness of death. To us—the portress, the old pensioner, and myself—he looked like one of the old Romans standing behind the Consuls in Lethière's picture of the *Death of the Sons of Brutus.*

"'He was a good-plucked one, the old Lascar!' said the pensioner in his soldierly fashion.

"But as for me, the dying man's fantastical enumeration of his riches was still sounding in my ears, and my eyes, following the direction of his, rested on that heap of ashes. It struck me that it was very large. I took the tongs, and as soon as I stirred the cinders, I felt the metal underneath, a mass of gold and silver coins, receipts taken during his illness, doubtless, after he grew too feeble to lock the money up, and could trust no one to take it to the bank for him.

"'Run for the justice of the peace,' said I, turning to the old pensioner, 'so that everything can be sealed here at once.'

"Gobseck's last words and the old portress's remarks had struck me. I took the keys of the rooms on the first and second floor to make a visitation. The first door that I opened revealed the meaning of the phrases which I took for mad ravings; and I saw the length to which covetousness goes when it survives only as an illogical instinct, the last stage of greed of which you

find so many examples among misers in country towns.

"In the room next to the one in which Gobseck had died, a quantity of eatables of all kinds were stored—putrid pies, moldy fish, nay even shell-fish, the stench almost choked me. Maggots and insects swarmed. These comparatively recent presents were put down, pell-mell, among chests of tea, bags of coffee, and packing-cases of every shape. A silver soup tureen on the chimney-piece was full of advices of the arrival of goods consigned to his order at Havre, bales of cotton, hogsheads of sugar, barrels of rum, coffees, indigo, tobaccos, a perfect bazaar of colonial produce. The room itself was crammed with furniture, and silver-plate, and lamps, and vases, and pictures; there were books, and curiosities, and fine engravings lying rolled up, unframed. Perhaps these were not all presents, and some part of this vast quantity of stuff had been deposited with him in the shape of pledges, and had been left on his hands in default of payment. I noticed jewel-cases, with ciphers and armorial-bearings stamped upon them, and sets of fine table-linen, and weapons of price; but none of the things were docketed. I opened a book which seemed to be misplaced, and found a thousand-franc note in it. I promised myself that I would go through everything thoroughly; I would try the ceilings, and floors, and walls, and cornices to discover all the gold, hoarded with such passionate greed by a Dutch miser worthy of a Rembrandt's brush. In all the course of my professional career I have never seen such impressive signs of the eccentricity of avarice.

"I went back to his room, and found an explanation of this chaos and accumulation of riches in a pile of letters lying under the paper-weights on his desk—Gobseck's correspondence with the various dealers to whom doubtless he usually sold his presents. These persons had, perhaps, fallen victims to Gobseck's cleverness, or Gobseck may have wanted fancy prices for his goods; at any rate, every bargain hung in suspense. He had not disposed of the eatables to Chevet, because Chevet would only take them of him at a loss of thirty per cent. Gobseck haggled for a few francs between the prices, and while they wrangled the goods became unsalable. Again, Gobseck had refused free delivery of his silver-plate, and declined to guarantee the weights of his coffees. There had been a dispute over each article, the first indication in Gobseck of the childishness and incomprehensible obstinacy of age, a condition of mind reached at last by all men in whom a strong passion survives the intellect.

"I said to myself, as he had said, 'To whom will all these riches go?' . . . And when I think of the grotesque information he gave me as to the present address of his heiress, I foresee that it will be my duty to search all the houses of ill-fame in Paris to pour out an immense fortune on some worthless jade. But, in the first place, know this—that in a few days' time Ernest de Restaud will come into a fortune to which his title is unquestionable, a fortune which will put him in a position to marry Mlle. Camille, even after adequate provision has been made for his

mother the Comtesse de Restaud, and his sister and brother.

"Well, dear M. Derville, we will think about it," said Mme. de Grandlieu. "M. Ernest ought to be very wealthy indeed if such a family as ours must accept that mother of his. Bear in mind that my son will be the Duc de Grandlieu one day; he will unite the estates of both the houses that bear our name, and I wish him to have a brother-in-law to his mind."

"But Restaud bears *gules, a traverse argent, on four scutcheons or, a cross sable,* and that is a very pretty coat of arms."

"That is true," said the Vicomtesse; "and besides, Camille need not see her mother-in-law."

"Mme. de Beauséant used to receive Mme. de Restaud," said the gray-haired uncle.

"Oh! that was at her great crushes," replied the Vicomtesse.

The Firm of Nucingen

To Mme. Zulma Carraud

To whom, madame, but to you should I inscribe this work; to you whose lofty and candid intellect is a treasury to your friends; to you that are to me not only a whole public, but the most indulgent of sisters as well? Will you deign to accept a token of the friendship of which I am proud? You, and some few souls as noble, will grasp the whole of the thought underlying The Firm of Nucingen, *appended to* César Birotteau. *Is there not a whole social lesson in the contrast between the two stories?*

De Balzac.

You know how slight the partitions are between the private rooms of fashionable restaurants in Paris; Véry's largest room, for instance, is cut in two by a removable screen. This Scene is *not* laid at Véry's, but in snug quarters, which for reasons of my own I forbear to specify. We were two, so I will say, like Henri Monnier's Prudhomme, "I should not like to compromise *her!*"

We had remarked the want of solidity in the wall-structure, so we talked with lowered voices as we sat together in the little private room, lingering over the dainty dishes of a dinner exquisite in more senses than one. We had come as far as the roast, however, and still we had no neighbors; no sound came from the next room save the crackling of the fire. But when the clock struck eight, we heard voices and noisy footsteps; the waiters brought candles. Evidently there was a party assembled in the next room, and at the first words I knew at once with whom we had to do—four bold cormorants as ever sprang from the foam on the crests of the ever-rising waves of this present generation—four pleasant young fellows whose existence was problematical, since they were not known to possess either stock or landed estates, yet they lived, and

lived well. These ingenious *condottieri* of a modern industrialism, that has come to be the most ruthless of all warfares, leave anxieties to their creditors, and keep the pleasures for themselves. They are careful for nothing, save dress. Still, with courage of the Jean Bart order, that will smoke cigars on a barrel of powder (perhaps by way of keeping up their character), with a quizzing humor that outdoes the minor newspapers, sparing no one, not even themselves, clear-sighted, wary, keen after business, grasping yet open-handed, envious yet self-complacement, profound politicians by fits and starts, analyzing everything, guessing everything—not one of these in question as yet had contrived to make his way in the world which they chose for their scene of operations. Only one of the four, indeed, had succeeded in coming as far as the foot of the ladder.

To have money is nothing; the self-made man only finds out all that he lacks after six months of flatteries. Andoche Finot, the self-made man in question, stiff, taciturn, cold, and dull-witted, possessed the sort of spirit which will not shrink from groveling before any creature that may be of use to him, and the cunning to be insolent when he needs a man no longer. Like one of the grotesque figures in the ballet in *Gustave,* he was a marquis behind, a boor in front. And this high priest of commerce had a following.

Émile Blondet, Journalist, with abundance of intellectual power, reckless, brilliant, and indolent, could do anything that he chose, yet he submitted to be exploited with his eyes open. Treacherous or kind upon impulse, a man to love, but not to respect; quick-witted as a soubrette, unable to refuse his pen to anyone that asked, or his heart to the first that would borrow it, Émile was the most fascinating of those light-of-loves of whom a fantastic modern wit declared that "he liked them better in satin slippers than in boots."

The third in the party, Couture by name, lived by speculation, grafting one affair upon another to make the gains pay for the losses. He was always between wind and water, keeping himself afloat by his bold, sudden strokes and the nervous energy of his play. Hither and thither he would swim over the vast sea of interests in Paris, in quest of some little isle that should be so far a debatable land that he might abide upon it. Clearly Couture was not in his proper place.

As for the fourth and most malicious personage, his name will be enough—it was Bixiou! Not (alas!) the Bixiou of 1825, but the Bixiou of 1836, a misanthropic buffoon, acknowledged supreme, by reason of his energetic and caustic wit; a very fiend let loose now that he saw how he had squandered his intellect in pure waste; a Bixiou vexed by the thought that he had not come by his share of the wreckage in the last Revolution; a Bixiou with a kick for everyone, like Pierrot at the Funambules. Bixiou had the whole history of his own times at his finger-ends, more particularly its scandalous chronicle, embellished by added waggeries of his own. He sprang like a clown upon everybody's back, only to do his utmost to leave the executioner's brand upon every pair of shoulders.

The first cravings of gluttony satis-

fied, our neighbors reached the stage at which we also had arrived, to-wit, the dessert; and, as we made no sign, they believed that they were alone. Thanks to the champagne, the talk grew confidential as they dallied with the dessert amid the cigar smoke. Yet through it all you felt the influence of the icy *esprit* that leaves the most spontaneous feeling frost-bound and stiff, that checks the most generous inspirations, and gives a sharp ring to the laughter. Their table-talk was full of the bitter irony which turns a jest into a sneer; it told of the exhaustion of souls given over to themselves; of lives with no end in view but the satisfaction of self—of egoism induced by these times of peace in which we live. I can think of nothing like it save a pamphlet against mankind at large which Diderot was afraid to publish, a book that bares man's breast simply to expose the plague-sores upon it. We listened to just such a pamphlet as *Rameau's Nephew,* spoken aloud in all good faith, in the course of after-dinner talk in which nothing, not even the point which the speaker wished to carry, was sacred from epigram; nothing taken for granted, nothing built up except upon ruins, nothing reverenced save the skeptic's adopted article of belief—the omnipotence, omniscience, and universal applicability of money.

After some target practice at the outer circle of their acquaintances, they turned their ill-natured shafts at their intimate friends. With a sign I explained my wish to stay and listen as soon as Bixiou took up his parable, as will shortly be seen. And so we listened to one of those terrific improvisations which won that artist such a name among a certain set of seared and jaded spirits; and often interrupted and resumed though it was, memory serves me as a reporter of it. The opinions expressed and the form of expression lie alike outside the conditions of literature. It was, more properly speaking, a medley of sinister revelations that paint our age, to which indeed no other kind of story should be told; and, besides, I throw all the responsibility upon the principal speaker. The pantomime and the gestures that accompanied Bixiou's changes of voice, as he acted the parts of the various persons, must have been perfect ,judging by the applause and admiring comments that broke from his audience of three.

"Then did Rastignac refuse?" asked Blondet, apparently addressing Finot.

"Point-blank."

"But did you threaten him with the newspapers?" asked Bixiou.

"He began to laugh," returned Finot.

"Rastignac is the late lamented de Marsay's direct heir; he will make his way politically as well as socially," commented Blondet.

"But how did he make his money?" asked Couture. "In 1819 both he and the illustrious Bianchon lived in a shabby boarding-house in the Latin Quarter; his people ate roast cockafers and drank their own wine so as to send him a hundred francs every month. His father's property was not worth a thousand crowns; he had two sisters and a brother on his hands, and now——"

"Now he has an income of forty thousaid livres," continued Finot; "his sisters had a handsome fortune apiece and married into noble families; he

leaves his mother a life interest in the property——"

"Even in 1827 I have known him without a penny," said Blondet.

"Oh! in 1827," said Bixiou.

"Well," resumed Finot, "yet to-day, as we see, he is in a fair way to be a Minister, a peer of France—anything that he likes. He broke decently with Delphine three years ago; he will not marry except on good grounds; and he may marry a girl of noble family. The chap had the sense to take up with a wealthy woman."

"My friends, give him the benefit of extenuating circumstances," urged Blondet. "When he escaped the clutches of want, he dropped into the claws of a very clever man."

"You know what Nucingen is," said Bixiou. "In the early days, Delphine and Rastignac thought him 'good-natuered'; he seemed to regard a wife as a plaything, an ornament in his house. And that very fact showed me that the man was square at the base as well as in height." added Bixiou. "Nucingen makes no bones about admitting that his wife is his fortune; she is an indispensable chattel, but a wife takes a second place in the high-pressure life of a political leader and greater capitalist. He once said in my hearing that Bonaparte had blundered like a bourgeois in his early relations with Josephine; and that after he had had the spirit to use her as a stepping-stone, he had made himself ridiculous by trying to make a companion of her."

"Any man of unusual powers is bound to take Oriental views of women," said Blondet.

"The Baron blended the opinions of East and West in a charming Parisian creed. He abhorred de Marsay; de Marsay was unmanageable, but with Rastignac he was much pleased; he exploited him, though Rastignac was not aware of it. All the burdens of married life were put on him. Rastignac bore the brunt of Delphine's whims; he escorted her to the Bois de Boulogne; he went with her to the play; and the little politician and great man of to-day spent a good deal of his life at that time in writing dainty notes. Eugène was scolded for little nothings from the first; he was in good spirits when Delphine was cheerful, and drooped when she felt low; he bore the weight of her confidences and her ailments; he gave up his time, the hours of his precious youth, to fill the empty void of that fair Parisian's idleness. Delphine and he held high councils on the toilettes which went best together; he stood the fire of bad temper and broadsides of pouting fits, while she, by way of trimming the balance, was very nice to the Baron. As for the Baron, he laughed in his sleeve; but whenever he saw that Rastignac was bending under the strain of the burden, he made 'as if he suspected something,' and reunited the lovers by a common dread."

"I can imagine that a wealthy wife would have put Rastignac in the way of a living, and an honorable living, but where did he pick up his fortune?" asked Couture. "A fortune so considerable as his at the present day must come from somewhere; and nobody ever accused him of inventing a good stroke of business."

"Somebody left it to him," said Finot.

"Who?" asked Blondet.

"Some fool that he came across," suggested Couture.

"He did not steal the whole of it, my little dears," said Bixiou.

"Let not your terrors rise to fever-heat,
Our age is lenient with those that cheat.

Now, I will tell you about the beginnings of his fortune. In the first place, honor to talent! Our friend is not a 'chap,' as Finot describes him, but a gentleman in the English sense, who knows the cards and knows the game; whom, moreover, the gallery respects. Rastignac has quite as much intelligence as is needed at a given moment, as if a soldier should make his courage payable at ninety days' sight, with three witnesses and guarantees. He may seem captious, wrong-headed, inconsequent, vacillating, and without any fixed opinions; but let something serious turn up, some combination to scheme out, he will not scatter himself like Blondet here, who chooses these occasions to look at things from his neighbor's point of view. Rastignac concentrates himself, pulls himself together, looks for the point to carry by storm, and goes full tilt for it. He charges like a Murat, breaks squares, pounds away at shareholders, promoters, and the whole shop, and returns, when the breach is made, to his lazy, careless life. Once more he becomes the man of the South, the man of pleasure, the trifling, idle Rastignac. He has earned the right of lying in bed till noon because a crisis never finds him asleep."

"So far so good, but just get to his fortune," said Finot.

"Bixiou will dash that off at a stroke," replied Blondet. "Rastignac's fortune was Delphine de Nucingen, a remarkable woman; she combines boldness with foresight."

"Did she ever lend you money?" inquired Bixiou. Everybody burst out laughing.

"You are mistaken in her," said Couture, speaking to Blondet: "her cleverness simply consists in making more or less piquant remarks, in loving Rastignac with tedious fidelity, and obeying him blindly. She is a regular Italian."

"Money apart," Andoche Finot put in sourly.

"Oh, come, come," said Bixiou coaxingly; "after what we have just been saying, will you venture to blame poor Rastignac for living at the expense of the firm of Nucingen, for being installed in furnished rooms precisely as La Torpille was once installed by our friend des Lupeaulx? You would sink to the vulgarity of the Rue Saint-Denis! First of all, 'in the abstract,' as Royer-Collard says, the question may abide the *Kritik of Pure Reason;* as for the impure reason——"

"There he goes!" said Finot, turning to Blondet.

"But there is reason in what he says," exclaimed Blondet. "The problem is a very old one; it was the grand secret of the famous duel between La Châtaigneraie and Jarnac. It was cast up to Jarnac that he was on good terms with his mother-in-law, who, loving him only too well, equipped him sumptuously. When a thing is so true, it ought not to be said. Out of devotion to Henry II., who permitted himself this

slander, La Châtaigneraie took it upon himself, and there followed the duel which enriched the French language with the expression *coup de Jarnac*."

"Oh! does it go so far back? Then it is noble?" said Finot.

"As proprietor of newspapers and reviews of old standing, you are not bound to know that," said Blondet.

"There are women," Bixiou gravely resumed, "and for that matter, men too, who can cut their lives in two and give away but one-half (Remark how I word my phrase for you in humanitarian language.) For these, all material interests lie without the range of sentiment. They give their time, their life, their honor to a woman, and hold that between themselves it is not the thing to meddle with bits of tissue paper bearing the legend, *'Forgery is punishable with death.'* And equally they will take nothing from a woman. Yes, the whole thing is debased if fusion of interests follows on fusion of souls. This is a doctrine much preached, and very seldom practiced."

"Oh, what rubbish!" cried Blondet. "The Maréchal de Richelieu understood something of gallantry, and he settled an allowance of a thousand louis d'or on Mme. de la Popelinière after that affair of the hiding-place behind the hearth. Agnes Sorel, in all simplicity, took her fortune to Charles VII., and the King accepted it. Jacques Cœur kept the crown for France; he was allowed to do it, and, woman-like, France was ungrateful."

"Gentlemen," said Bixiou, "a love that does not imply an indissoluble friendship, to my thinking, is momentary libertinage. What sort of entire surrender is it that keeps something back? Between these two diametrically opposed doctrines, the one as profoundly immoral as the other, there is no possible compromise. It seems to me that any shrinking from a complete union is surely due to a belief that the union cannot last, and if so, farewell to illusion. The passion that does not believe that it will last forever is a hideous thing. (Here is pure, unadulterated Fénelon for you!) At the same time, those who know the world, the observer, the man of the world, the wearers of irreproachable gloves and ties, the men who do not blush to marry a woman for her money, proclaim the necessity of a complete separation of sentiment and interest. The other sort are lunatics that love and imagine that they and the woman they love are the only two beings in the world; for them millions are dirt; the glove or the camellia flower that She wore is worth millions. If the squandered filthy lucre is never to be found again in their possession, you find the remains of floral relics hoarded in dainty cedar-wood boxes. They cannot distinguish themselves one from the other; for them there is no 'I' left. *Thou*—that is their Word made flesh. What can you do? Can you stop the course of this 'hidden disease of the heart'? There are fools that love without calculation, and wise men that calculate while they love."

"To my thinking Bixiou is sublime," cried Blondet. "What does Finot say to it?"

"Anywhere else," said Finot, drawing himself up in his cravat, "anywhere else, I should say, with the 'gentlemen'; but here, I think——"

"With the scoundrelly scapegraces with whom you have the honor to associate?" said Bixiou.

"Upon my word, yes."

"And you?" asked Bixiou, turning to Couture.

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried Couture. "The woman that will not make a stepping-stone of her body, that the man she singles out may reach his goal, is a woman that has no heart except for her own purposes."

"And you, Blondet?"

"I do not preach, I practice."

"Very good," rejoined Bixiou in his most ironical tones. "Rastignac was not of your way of thinking. To take without repaying is detestable, and even rather bad form; but to take that you may render a hundredfold, like the Lord, is a chivalrous deed. This was Rastignac's view. He felt profoundly humiliated by his community of interests with Delphine de Nucingen; I can tell you that he regretted it; I have seen him deploring his position with tears in his eyes. Yes, he shed tears, he did indeed—after supper. Well, now to *our* way of thinking——"

"I say, you are laughing at us," said Finot.

"Not the least in the world. We were talking of Rastignac. From your point of view his affliction would be a sign of his corruption; for by that time he was not nearly so much in love with Delphine. What would you have? he felt the prick in his heart, poor fellow. But he was a man of noble decent and profound depravity, whereas we are virtuous artists. So Rastignac meant to enrrich Delphine; he was a poor man, she a rich woman. Would you believe it?—he succeeded. Rastignac, who might have fought at need, like Jarnac, went over to the opinion of Henri II. on the strength of his great maxim, 'There is no such thing as absolute right; there are only circumstances.' This brings us to the history of his fortune."

"You might just as well make a start with your story instead of drawing us on to traduce ourselves," said Blondet with urbane good-humor.

"Aha! my boy," returned Bixiou, administering a little tap to the back of Blondet's head, "you are making up for lost time over the champagne!"

"Oh! by the sacred name of shareholder, get on with your story!" cried Couture.

"I was within an ace of it," retorted Bixiou, "but you with your profanity have brought me to the climax."

"Then, are there shareholders in the tale?" inquired Finot.

"Yes; rich as rich can be—like yours."

"It seems to me," Finot began stiffly, "that some consideration is owing to a good fellow to whom you look for a bill for five hundred francs upon occasion——"

"Waiter!" called Bixiou.

"What do you want with the waiter?" asked Blondet.

"I want five hundred francs to repay Finot, so that I can tear up my I. O. U. and set my tongue free."

"Get on with your story," said Finot, making believe to laugh.

"I take you all to witness that I am not the property of this insolent fellow, who fancies that my silence is worth no more than five hundred francs. You will never be a minister if you cannot

gauge people's consciences. There, my good Finot," he added soothingly, "I will get on with my story without personalities, and we shall be quits."

"Now," said Couture with a smile, "he will begin to prove for our benefit that Nucingen made Rastignac's fortune."

"You are not so far out as you think," returned Bixiou. "You do not know what Nucingen is, financially speaking."

"Do you know so much as a word as to his beginnings?" asked Blondet.

"I have only known him in his own house," said Bixiou, "but we may have seen each other in the street in the old days."

"The prosperity of the firm of Nucingen is one of the most extraordinary things seen in our days," began Blondet "In 1804 Nucingen's name was scarcely known. At that time bankers would have shuddered at the idea of three hundred thousand francs' worth of his acceptances in the market. The great capitalist felt his inferiority. How was he to get known? He suspended payment. Good! Every market rang with a name hitherto only known in Strasbourg and the Quartier Poissonière. He issued deposit certificates to his creditors, and resumed payment; forthwith people grew accustomed to his paper all over France. Then an unheard-of thing happened—his paper revived, was in demand, and rose in value. Nucingen's paper was much inquired for. The year 1815 arrives, my banker calls in his capital, buys up Government stock before the battle of Waterloo, suspends payment again in the thick of the crisis, and meets his engagements with shares in the Wortschin mines, which he himself issued at twenty per cent. more than he gave for them! Yes, gentlemen!—He took a hundred and fifty thousand bottles of champagne of Grandet to cover himself (foreseeing the failure of the virtuous parent of the present Comte d'Aubrion), and as much Bordeaux wine of Duberghe at the same time. Those three hundred thousand bottles which he took over (and took over at thirty sous apiece, my dear boy) he supplied at the price of six francs per bottle to the Allies in the Palais Royal during the foreign occupation, between 1817 and 1819. Nucingen's name and his paper acquired a European celebrity The illustrious Baron, so far from being engulfed like others, rose the higher for calamities. Twice his arrangements had paid holders of his paper uncommonly well; *he* try to swindle them? Impossible. He is supposed to be as honest a man as you will find. When he suspends payment a third time, his paper will circulate in Asia, Mexico, and Australia, among the aborigines. No one but Ouvrard saw through this Alsatian banker, the son of some Jew or other converted by ambition; Ouvrard said, 'When Nucingen lets gold go, you may be sure that it is to catch diamonds.'"

"His crony, du Tillet, is just such another," said Finot. "And, mind you, that of birth du Tillet has just precisely so much as is necessary to exist; the chap had not a farthing in 1814, and you see what he is now; and he has done something that none of us has managed to do (I am not speaking of you, Coutre), he has had friends instead of enemies. In fact, he has kept his past life so quiet, that unless you rake the sewers you are not likely to find

out that he was an assistant in a perfumer's shop in the Rue Saint-Honoré, no further back than 1814."

"Tut, tut, tut!" said Bixiou, "do not think of comparing Nucingen with a little dabbler like du Tillet, a jackal that gets on in life through his sense of smell. He scents a carcass by instinct, and comes in time to get the best bone. Besides, just look at the two men. The one has a sharp-pointed face like a cat, he is thin and lanky; the other is cubical, fat, heavy as a sack, imperturbable as a diplomatist. Nucingen has a thick, heavy hand, and lynx eyes that never light up; his depths are not in front, but behind; he is inscrutable, you never see what he is making for. Whereas du Tillet's cunning, as Napoleon said of somebody (I have forgotten the name), is like cotton spun too fine, it breaks."

"I do not myself see that Nucingen has any advantage over du Tillet," said Blondet, "unless it is that he has the sense to see that a capitalist ought not to rise higher than a baron's rank, while du Tillet has a mind to be an Italian count."

"Blondet—one word, my boy," put in Couture. "In the first place, Nucingen dared to say that honesty is simply a question of appearances; and secondly, to know him well you must be in business yourself. With him banking is but a single department, and a very small one; he holds Government contracts for wines, wools, indigoes—anything, in short, on which any profit can be made. He has an all-round genius. The elephant of finance would contract to deliver votes on a division, or the Greeks to the Turks. For him business means the sum-total of varieties; as Cousin would say, the unity of specialties. Looked at in this way, banking becomes a kind of statecraft in itself, requiring a powerful head; and a man thoroughly tempered is drawn on to set himself above the laws of a morality that cramps him."

"Right, my son," said Blondet; "but we, and we alone, can comprehend that this means bringing war into the financial world. A banker is a conquering general making sacrifices on a tremendous scale to gain ends that no one perceives; his soldiers are private people's interests. He has stratagems to plan out, partisans to bring into the field, ambushes to set, towns to take. Most men of this stamp are so close upon the borders of politics, that in the end they are drawn into public life, and thereby lose their fortunes. The firm of Necker, for instance, was ruined in this way; the famous Samuel Bernard was all but ruined. Some great capitalist in every age makes a colossal fortune, and leaves behind him neither fortune nor a family; there was the firm of Pâris Brothers, for instance, that helped to pull down Law; there was Law himself (beside whom other promoters of companies are but pygmies); there was Bouret and Beaujon—none of them left any representative. Finance, like Time, devours its own children. If the banker is to perpetuate himself, he must found a noble house, a dynasty; like the Fuggers of Antwerp, that lent money to Charles V. and were created Princes of Babenhausen, a family that exists at this day—in the *Almanach de Gotha*. The instinct of self-preservation, working it may be unconsciously,

leads the banker to seek a title. Jacques Cœur was the founder of the great noble house of Noirmoutier, extinct in the reign of Louis XIII. What power that man had! He was ruined for making a legitimate king; and he died, prince of an island in the Archipelago, where he built a magnificent cathedral."

"Oh! you are giving us a historical lecture, we are wandering away from the present; the crown has no right of conferring nobility, and barons and counts are made with closed doors; more is the pity!" said Finot.

"You regret the times of the *savonnette à vilain,* when you could buy an office that ennobled?" asked Bixiou. "You are right. *Je reviens à nos moutons.*—Do you know Beaudenord? No? no? no? Ah, well! See how all things pass away! Poor fellow, ten years ago he was the flower of dandyism; and now, so thoroughly absorbed that you no more know him than Finot just now knew the origin of the expression '*coup de Jarnac*'—I repeat that simply for the sake of illustration, and not to tease you, Finot. Well, it is a fact, he belonged to the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

"Beaudenord is the first pigeon that I will bring on the scene. And, in the first place, his name was Godefroid de Beaudenord; neither Finot, nor Blondet, nor Couture, nor I are likely to undervalue such an advantage as that! After a ball, when a score of pretty women stand behooded waiting for their carriages, with their husbands and adorers at their sides, Beaudenord could hear his people called without a pang of mortification. In the second place, he rejoiced in the full complement of limbs; he was whole and sound, had no mote in his eyes, no false hair, no artificial calves; he was neither knock-kneed nor bandy-legged, his dorsal column was straight, his waist slender, his hands white and shapely. His hair was black; he was of a complexion neither too pink, like a grocer's assistant, nor yet too brown, like a Calabrese. Finally, and this is an essential point, Beaudenord was not too handsome, like some of our friends that look rather too much of professional beauties to be anything else; but no more of that; we have said it, it is shocking! Well, he was a crack shot, and sat a horse to admiration; he had fought a duel for a trifle, and had not killed his man.

"If you wish to know in what pure, complete, and unadulterated happiness consists in this Nineteenth Century in Paris—the happiness, that is to say, of a young man of twenty-six—do you realize that you must enter into the infinitely small details of existence? Beaudenord's bootmaker had precisely hit off his style of foot; he was well shod; his tailor loved to clothe him. Godefroid neither rolled his r's, nor lapsed into Normanism nor Gascon; he spoke pure and correct French, and tied his cravat correctly (like Finot). He had neither father nor mother—such luck had he!—and his guardian was the Marquis d'Aiglemont, his cousin by marriage. He could go among city people as he chose, and the Faubourg Saint-Germain could make no objection; for, fortunately, a young bachelor is allowed to make his own pleasure his sole rule of life, he is at liberty to betake himself wherever amusement is to be found, and to shun the gloomy places where cares flourish and multiply.

Finally, he had been vaccinated (you know what I mean, Blondet).

"And yet, in spite of all these virtues," continued Bixiou, "he might very well have been a very unhappy young man. Eh! eh! that word happiness, unhappily, seems to us to mean something absolute, a delusion which sets so many wisacres inquiring what happiness is. A very clever woman said that 'Happiness was where you chose to put it.'"

"She formulated a dismal truth," said Blondet.

"And a moral," added Finot.

"Double distilled," said Blondet. "Happiness, like Good, like Evil, is relative. Wherefore La Fontaine used to hope that in course of time the damned would feel as much at home in hell as a fish in water."

"La Fontaine's sayings are known in Philistia!" put in Bixiou.

"Happiness at six-and-twenty in Paris is not the happiness of six-and-twenty at—say Blois," continued Blondet, taking no notice of the interruption. "And those that proceed from this text to rail at the instability of opinion are either knaves or fools for their pains. Modern medicine, which passed (it is its fairest title to glory) from a hypothetical to a positive science, through the influence of the great analytical school of Paris, has proved beyond a doubt that a man is periodically renewed throughout——"

"New haft, new blade, like Jeannot's knife, and yet you think that he is still the same man," broke in Bixiou. "So there are several lozenges in the harlequin's coat that we call happiness; and —well, there was neither hole nor stain in this Godefroid's costume. A young man of six-and-twenty, who would be happy in love, who would be loved, that is to say, not for his blossoming youth, nor for his wit, nor for his figure, but spontaneously, and not even merely in return for his own love; a young man, I say, who has found love in the abstract, to quote Royer-Collard, might yet very possibly find never a farthing in the purse which She, loving and beloved, embroidered for him; he might owe rent to his landlord; he might be unable to pay the bootmaker before mentioned; his very tailor, like France herself, might at last show signs of disaffection. In short, he might have love and yet be poor. And poverty spoils a young man's happiness, unless he holds our transcendental views of the fusion of interests. I know nothing more wearing than happiness within combined with adversity without. It is as if you had one leg freezing in the draught from the door, and the other half-roasted by a brazier—as I have at this moment. I hope to be understood. Comes there an echo from thy waistcoat-pocket, Blondet? Between ourselves, let the heart alone, it spoils the intellect.

"Let us resume. Godefroid de Beaudenord was respected by his tradespeople, for they were paid with tolerable regularity. The witty woman before quoted —I cannot give her name, for she is still living, thanks to her want of heart——"

"Who is this?"

"The Marquise d'Espard. She said that a young man ought to live on an entresol; there should be no sign of domesticity about the place; no cook, no kitchen, an old man-servant to wait upon him, and no pretense of a ner-

manence. In her opinion, any other sort of establishment is bad form. Godefroid de Beaudenord, faithful to this programme, lodged on an entresol on the Quai Malaquais; he had, however, been obliged to have this much in common with married couples, he had put a bedstead in his room, though for that matter it was so narrow that he seldom slept in it. An Englishwoman might have visited his rooms and found nothing 'improper' there. Finot, you have yet to learn the great law of the 'Improper' that rules Britain. But, for the sake of the bond between us—that bill for a thousand francs—I will just give you some idea of it. I have been in England myself.—I will give him wit enough for a couple of thousand," he added in an aside to Blondet.

"In England, Finot, you grow extremely intimate with a woman in the course of an evening, at a ball or wherever it is; next day you meet her in the street and look as though you knew her again—'improper.'—At dinner you discover a delightful man beneath your left-hand neighbor's dresscoat; a clever man; no high-mightiness, no constraint, nothing of an Englishman about him. In accordance with the traditions of French breeding, so urbane, so gracious as they are, you address your neighbor—'improper.'—At a ball you walk up to a pretty woman to ask her to dance—'improper.' You wax enthusiastic, you argue, laugh, and give yourself out, you fling yourself heart and soul into the conversation, you give expression to your real feelings, you play when you are at the card-table, chat while you chat, eat while you eat—'improper! improper! improper!' Stendhal, one of the cleverest and profoundest minds of the age, hit off the 'improper' excellently well when he said that such-and-such a British peer did not dare to cross his legs when he sat alone before his own hearth for fear of being improper. An English gentlewoman, were she one of the rabid 'Saints'—that most straitest sect of Protestants that would leave their whole family to starve if the said family did anything 'improper'—may play the deuce's own delight in her bedroom, and need not be 'improper,' but she would look on herself as lost if she received a visit from a man of her acquaintance in the aforesaid room. Thanks to propriety, London and its inhabitants will be found petrified some of these days."

"And to think that there are asses here in France that want to import the solemn tomfoolery that the English keep up among themselves with that admirable self-possession which you know!" added Blondet. "It is enough to make any man shudder if he has seen the English at home, and recollects the charming, gracious French manners. Sir Walter Scott was afraid to paint women as they are for fear of being 'improper'; and at the close of his life repented of the creation of the great character of Effie in *The Heart of Midlothian*."

"Do you wish not to be 'improper' in England?" asked Bixiou, addressing Finot.

"Well?"

"Go to the Tuileries and look at a figure there, something like a fireman carved in marble ('Themistocles,' the statuary calls it), try to walk like the Commandant's statue, and you will

never be 'improper.' It was through strict observance of the great law of the *Im*proper that Godefroid's happiness became complete. Here is the story:—

"Beaudenord had a tiger, not a 'groom,' as they write that know nothing of society. The tiger, a diminutive Irish page, called Paddy, Toby, Joby (which you please), was three feet in height by twenty inches in breadth, a weasel-faced infant, with nerves of steel tempered in fire-water, and agile as a squirrel. He drove a landau with a skill never yet at fault in London or Paris. He had a lizard's eye, as sharp as my own, and he could mount a horse like the elder Franconi. With the rosy cheeks and yellow hair of one of Ruben's Madonnas, he was double-faced as a prince, and as knowing as an old attorney; in short, at the age of ten he was nothing more nor less than a blossom of depravity, gambling and swearing, partial to jam and punch, pert as a *feuilleton,* impudent and light-fingered as any Paris street-arab. He had been a source of honor and profit to a well-known English lord, for whom he had already won seven hundred thousand francs on the racecourse. The aforesaid nobleman set no small store on Toby. His tiger was a curiosity, the very smallest tiger in town. Perched aloft on the back of a thoroughbred, Joby looked like a hawk. Yet—the great man dismissed him. Not for greediness, not for dishonesty, nor murder, nor for criminal conversation, nor for bad manners, nor rudeness to my lady, nor for cutting holes in my lady's own woman's pockets, nor because he had been 'got at' by some of his master's rivals on the turf, nor for playing games of a Sunday, nor for bad behavior of any sort or description. Toby might have done all these things, he might even have spoken to milord before milord spoke to him, and his noble master might, perhaps, have pardoned that breach of the law domestic. Milord would have put up with a good deal from Toby; he was very fond of him. Toby could drive a tandem dog-cart, riding on the wheeler, postilion fashion; his legs did not reach the shafts, he looked in fact very much like one of the cherub heads circling about the Eternal Father in old Italian pictures. But an English journalist wrote a delicious description of the little angel, in the course of which he said that Paddy was quite too pretty for a tiger; in fact, he offered to bet that Paddy was a tame tigress. The description, on the heads of it, was calculated to poison minds and end in something 'improper.' And the superlative of 'improper' is the way to the gallows. Milord's circumspection was highly approved by my lady.

"But poor Toby, now that his precise position in insular zoology had been called in question, found himself hopelessly out of place. At that time Godefroid had blossomed out at the French Embassy in London, where he learned the adventures of Toby, Joby, Paddy. Godefroid found the infant weeping over a pot of jam (he had already lost the guineas with which milord gilded his misfortune). Godefroid took possession of him; and so it fell out that on his return among us he brought back with him the sweetest thing in tigers from England. He was known

by his tiger—as Couture is known by hais waistcoats—and found no difficulty in entering the fraternity of the club yclept to-day the Grammont. He had renounced the diplomatic career; he ceased accordingly to alarm the susceptibilities of the ambitious; and as he had no very dangerous amount of intellect, he was well looked upon everywhere.

"Some of us would feel mortified if we saw only smiling faces wherever we went; we enjoy the sour contortions of envy. Godefroid did not like to be disliked. Everyone has his tastes. Now for the solid, practical aspects of life!

"The distinguishing feature of his chambers, where I have licked my lips over breakfast more than once, was a mysterious dressing-closet, nicely decorated, and comfortably appointed, with a grate in it and a bath-tub. It gave upon a narrow staircase, the folding doors were noiseless, the locks well oiled, the hinges discreet, the window panes of frosted glass, the curtain impervious to light. While the bedroom was, as it ought to have been, in a fine disorder which would suit the most exacting painter in water-colors; while everything therein was redolent of the Bohemian life of a young man of fashion, the dressing-closet was like a shrine—white, spotless, neat, and warm. There were no draughts from door or window, the carpet had been made soft for bare feet hastily put to the floor in a sudden panic of alarm—which stamps him as your thoroughbred dandy that knows life; for here, in a few moments, he may show himself either a noodle or a master in those little details in which a man's character is revealed. The Marquise previously quoted—no, it was the Marquise de Rochefide—came out of that dressing-closet in a furious rage, and never went back again. She discovered nothing 'improper' in it. Godefroid used to keep a little cupboard full of——"

"Waistcoats?" suggested Finot.

"Come, now, just like you, great Turcaret that you are. (I shall never form that fellow.) Why, no. Full of cakes, and fruit, and dainty little flasks of Malaga and Lunel; an *en cas de nuit* in Louis Quatorze's style; anything that can tickle the delicate and well-bred appetite of sixteen quarterings. A knowing old man-servant, very strong in matters veterinary, waited on the horses and groomed Godefroid. He had been with the late M. de Beaudenord, Godefroid's father, and bore Godefroid an inveterate affection, a kind of heart complaint which has almost disappeared among domestic servants since savings banks were established.

"All material well-being is based upon arithmetic. You, to whom Paris is known down to its very excrescences, will see that Beaudenord must have required about seventeen thousand livres per annum; for he paid some seventeen francs of taxes and spent a thousand crowns on his own whims. Well, dear boys, when Godefroid came of age, the Marquis d'Aiglemont submitted to him such an account of his trust as none of us would be likely to give a nephew; Godefroid's name was inscribed as the owner of eighteen thousand livres of *rentes*, a remnant of his father's wealth spared by the harrow of the great reduction under the Republic and the hailstorms of Imperial arrears. D'Aigle-

mont, that upright guardian, also put his ward in possession of some thirty thousand francs of savings invested with the firm of Nucingen; saying with all the charm of a *grand seigneur* and the indulgence of a soldier of the Empire, that he had contrived to put it aside for his ward's young man's follies. 'If you will take my advice, Godefroid,' added he, 'instead of squandering the money like a fool, as so many young men do, let it go in follies that will be useful to you afterwards. Take an attaché's post at Turin, and then go to Naples, and from Naples to London, and you will be amused and learn something for your money. Afterwards, if you think of a career, the time and the money will not have been thrown away.' The late lamented d'Aiglemont had more sense than people credited him with, which is more than can be said of some of us."

"A young fellow that starts with an assured income of eighteen thousand livres at one-and-twenty is lost," said Couture.

"Unless he is miserly, or very much above the ordinary level," added Blondet.

"Well, Godefroid sojourned in the four capitals of Italy," continued Bixiou. "He lived in England and Germany, he spent some little time at St. Petersburg, he ran over Holland; but he parted company with the aforesaid thirty thousand francs by living as if he had thirty thousand a year. Everywhere he found the same *suprême de volaille*, the same aspics, and French wines; he heard French spoken wherever he went—in short, he never got away from Paris. He ought, of course, to have tried to deprave his disposition, to fence himself in triple brass, to get rid of his illusions, to learn to hear anything said without a blush, and to master the inmost secrets of the Powers.—Pooh! with a good deal of trouble he equipped himself with four languages—that is to say, he laid in a stock of four words for one idea. Then he came back, and certain tedious dowagers, styled 'conquests' abroad, were left disconsolate. Godefroid came back, shy, scarcely formed, a good fellow with a confiding disposition, incapable of saying ill of anyone who honored him with an admittance to his house, too stanch to be a diplomatist, altogether he was what we call a thoroughly good fellow."

"To cut it short, a brat with eighteen thousand livres per annum to drop over the first investment that turns up," said Couture.

"That confounded Couture has such a habit of anticipating dividends, that he is anticipating the end of my tale. Where was I? Oh! Beaudenord came back. When he took up his abode on the Quai Malaquais, it came to pass that a thousand francs over and above his needs was altogether insufficient to keep up his share of a box at the Italiens and the Opéra properly. When he lost twenty-five or thirty louis at play at one swoop, naturally he paid; when he won, he spent the money; so should we if we were fools enough to be drawn into a bet. Beaudenord, feeling pinched with his eighteen thousand francs, saw the necessity of creating what we to-day call a balance in hand. It was a great notion of his 'not to get too deep.' He took counsel of his sometime guardian. 'The Funds are now at par, my dear

boy,' quoth d'Aiglemont; 'sell out. I have sold out mine and my wife's. Nucingen has all my capital, and is giving me six per cent.; do likewise, you will have one per cent. the more upon your capital, and with that you will be quite comfortable.'

"In three days' time our Godefroid was comfortable. His increase of income exactly supplied his superfluities; his material happiness was complete.

"Suppose that it were possible to read the minds of all the young men in Paris at one glance (as, it appears, will be done at the Day of Judgment with all the millions upon millions that have groveled in all spheres, and worn all uniforms or the uniform of nature), and to ask them whether happiness at six-and-twenty is or is not made up of the following items—to wit, to own a saddlehorse and a tilbury, or a cab, with a fresh, rosy-faced Toby Joby Paddy no bigger than your fist, and to hire an unimpeachable brougham for twelve francs an evening; to appear elegantly arrayed, agreeably to the laws that regulate a man's clothes, at eight o'clock, noon, four o'clock in the afternoon, and in the evening; to be well received at every embassy, and to cull the short-lived flowers of superficial, cosmopolitan friendships; to be not insufferably handsome, to carry your head, your coat, and your name well; to inhabit a charming little entresol after the pattern of the rooms just described on the Quai Malaquais; to be able to ask a party of friends to dine at the Rocher de Cancale without a previous consultation with your trousers pocket; never to be pulled up in any rational project by the words, 'And the money?' and finally, to be able to renew at pleasure the pink rosettes that adorn the ears of three thoroughbreds and the lining of your hat?

"To such inquiry any ordinary young man (and we ourselves that are not ordinary men) would reply that the happiness is incomplete; that it is like the Madeleine without the altar; that a man must love and be loved, or love without return, or be loved without loving, or love at cross-purposes. Now for happiness as a mental condition.

"In January 1823, after Godefroid de Beaudenord had set foot in the various social circles which it pleased him to enter, and knew his way about in them, and felt himself secure amid these joys, he saw the necessity of a sunshade—the advantage of having a great lady to complain of, instead of chewing the stems of roses bought for fivepence apiece of Mme. Prévost, after the manner of the callow youngsters that chirp and cackle in the lobbies of the Opéra, like chickens in a coop. In short, he resolved to center his ideas, his sentiments, his affections upon a woman, *one woman?*—La Phamme! Ah! . . .

"At first he conceived the preposterous notion of an unhappy passion, and gyrated for a while about his fair cousin, Mme. d'Aiglemont, not perceiving that she had already danced the waltz in *Faust* with a diplomatist. The year '25 went by, spent in tentatives, in futile flirtations, and an unsuccessful quest. The loving object of which he was in search did not appear. Passion is extremely rare; and in our time as many barriers have been raised against passion in social life as barricades in the streets. In truth, my brothers, the

'improper' is gaining upon us, I tell you!

"As we may incur reproach for following on the heels of portrait painters, auctioneers, and fashionable dressmakers, I will not inflict any description upon you of *her* in whom Godefroid recognized the female of his species. Age, nineteen; height, four feet eleven inches; fair hair, eyebrows *idem,* blue eyes, forehead neither high nor low, curved nose, little mouth, short turned-up chin, oval face; distinguishing signs —none. Such was the description on the passport of the beloved object. You will not ask more than the police, or their worships the mayors, of all the towns and communes of France, the gendarmes and the rest of the powers that be? In other respects—I give you my word for it—she was a rough sketch of a Venus dei Medici.

"The first time that Godefroid went to one of the balls for which Mme. de Nucingen enjoyed a certain not undeserved reputation, he caught a glimpse of his future lady-love in a quadrille, and was set marveling by that height of four feet eleven inches. The fair hair rippled in a shower of curls about the little girlish head, she looked as fresh as a naïad peeping out through the crystal pane of her stream to take a look at the spring flowers. (This is quite in the modern style, strings of phrases as endless as the macaroni on the table a while ago.) On that 'eyebrows *idem*' (no offense to the prefect of police) Parny, that writer of light and playful verse, would have hung half-a-dozen couplets, comparing them very agreeably to Cupid's bow, at the same time bidding us observe that the dart was beneath; the said dart, however, was neither very potent nor very penetrating, for as yet it was controlled by the namby-pamby sweetness of a Mlle. de la Vallière as depicted on fire-screens, at the moment when she solemnizes her betrothal in the sight of heaven, any solemnization before the registrar being quite out of the question.

"You know the effect of fair hair and blue eyes in the soft, voluptuous, decorous dance? Such a girl does not knock audaciously at your heart, like the dark-haired damsels that seem to say after the fashion of Spanish beggars, 'Your money or your life; give me five francs or take my contempt!' These insolent and somewhat dangerous beauties may find favor in the sight of many men, but to my thinking the blonde that has the good fortune to look extremely tender and yielding, while foregoing none of her rights to scold, to tease, to use unmeasured language, to be jealous without grounds, to do anything, in short, that makes woman adorable,—the fair-haired girl, I say, will always be more sure to marry than the ardent brunette. Firewood is dear, you see.

"Isaure, white as an Alsacienne (she first saw the light at Strasbourg, and spoke German with a slight and very agreeable French accent), danced to admiration. Her feet, omitted on the passport, though they really might have found a place there under the heading Distinguishing Signs, were remarkable for their small size, and for that particular something which old-fashioned dancing masters used to call *flic-flac,* a something that put you in mind of Mlle. Mars's agreeable delivery, for all the Muses are sisters, and dancer and poet

alike have their feet upon the earth. Isaure's feet spoke lightly and swiftly with a clearness and precision which augured well for the things of the heart. '*Elle a du flic-flac,*' was old Marcel's highest word of praise, and old Marcel was the dancing master that deserved the epithet of 'the Great.' People used to say 'the Great Marcel,' as they said 'Frederick the Great,' and in Frederick's time.

"Did Marcel composed any ballets?" inquired Finot.

"Yes, something in the style of *Les quatre Éléments* and *L'Europe Galante.*"

"What times they were, when great nobles dressed the dancers!" said Finot.

"Improper!" said Bixiou. "Isaure did not raise herself on the tips of her toes, she stayed on the ground, she swayed in the dance without jerks, and neither more or less voluptuously than a young lady ought to do. There was a profound philosophy in Marcel's remark that every age and condition had its dance; a married woman should not dance like a young girl, nor a little jackanapes like a capitalist, nor a soldier like a page; he even went so far as to say that the infantry ought not to dance like the cavalry, and from this point he proceeded to classify the world at large. All these fine distinctions seem very far away."

"Ah!" said Blondet, "you have set your finger on a great calamity. If Marcel had been properly understood, there would have been no French Revolution."

"It had been Godefroid's privilege to run over Europe," resumed Bixiou, "nor had he neglected his opportunities of making a thorough comparative study of European dancing. Perhaps but for profound diligence in the pursuit of what is usually held to be useless knowledge, he would never have fallen in love with this young lady; as it was, out of the three hundred guests that crowded the handsome rooms in the Rue Saint-Lazare, he alone comprehended the unpublished romance revealed by a garrulous quadrille. People certainly noticed Isaure d'Aldrigger's dancing; but in this present century the cry is, 'Skim lightly over the surface, do not lean your weight on it'; so one said (he was a notary's clerk), 'There is a girl that dances uncommonly well'; another (a lady in a turban), 'There is a young lady that dances enchantingly'; and a third (a woman of thirty), 'That little thing is not dancing badly.'—But to return to the great Marcel, let us parody his best known saying with, 'How much there is in an *avantdeux.*' "

"And let us get on a little faster," said Blondet; "you are maundering."

"Isaure," continued Bixiou, looking askance at Blondet, "wore a simple white crêpe dress with green ribbons; she had a camellia in her hair, a camellia at her waist, another camellia at her skirt-hem, and a camellia——"

"Come, now! here come Sancho's three hundred goats."

"Therein lies all literature, dear boy. *Clarissa* is a masterpiece, there are fourteen volumes of her, and the most woomen-headed playwright would give you the whole of *Clarissa* in a single act. So long as I amuse you, what have you to complain of? That costume was positively lovely. Don't you like camellias? Would you rather have dahlias? No? Very good, chestnuts then, here's for

you." (And probably Bixiou flung a chestnut across the table, for we heard something drop on a plate.)

"I was wrong, I acknowledge it. Go on," said Blondet.

"I resume. 'Pretty enough to marry, isn't she?' said Rastignac, coming up to Godefroid de Baudenord, and indicating the little one with the spotless white camellias, every petal intact.

"Rastignac being an intimate friend, Godefroid answered in a low voice, 'Well, so I was thinking. I was saying to myself that instead of enjoying my happiness with fear and trembling at every moment; instead of taking a world of trouble to whisper a word in an inattentive ear, of looking over the house at the Italiens to see if someone wears a red flower or a white in her hair, or watching along the Corso for a gloved hand on a carriage door, as we used to do at Milan; instead of snatching a mouthful of baba like a lackey finishing off a bottle behind a door, or wearing out one's wits with giving and receiving letters like a postman—letters that consist not of a mere couple of tender lines, but expand to five folio volumes to-day and contract to a couple of sheets to-morrow (a tiresome practice); instead of dragging along over the ruts and dodging behind hedges—it would be better to give way to the adorable passion that Jean-Jacques Rousseau envied, to fall frankly in love with a girl like Isaure, with a view to making her my wife, if upon exchange of sentiments our hearts respond to each other; to be Werther, in short, with a happy ending.'

"'Which is a common weakness,' returned Rastignac without laughing. 'Possibly in your place I might plunge into the unspeakable delights of that ascetic course; it possesses the merits of novelty and originality, and it is not very expensive. Your Monna Lisa is sweet, but inane as music for the ballet; I give you warning.'

"Rastignac made this last remark in a way which set Beaudenord thinking that his friend had his own motives for disenchanting him; Beaudenord had not been a diplomatist for nothing; he fancied that Rastignac wanted to cut him out. If a man mistakes his vocation, the false start none the less influences him for the rest of his life. Godefroid was so evidently smitten with Mlle. Isaure d'Aldrigger, that Rastignac went off to a tall girl chatting in the card-room.—'Malvina,' he said, lowering his voice, 'your sister has just netted a fish worth eighteen thousand francs a year. He has a name, a manner, and a certain position in the world; keep an eye upon them; be careful to gain Isaure's confidence; and if they philander, do not let her send a word to him unless you have seen it first——'

"Towards two o'clock in the morning, Isaure was standing beside a diminutive Shepherdess of the Alps, a little woman of forty, coquettish as a Zerlina. A footman announced that 'Mme. la Baronne's carriage stops the way,' and Godefroid forthwith saw his beautiful maiden out of a German song draw her fantastical mother into the cloak-room, whither Malvina followed them; and (boy that he was) he must needs go to discover into what pot of preserves the infant Joby had fallen, and had the pleasure of watching Isaure and Malvina, coaxing that sparkling person, their mamma, into her pelisse, with all the

little tender precautions required for a night journey in Paris. Of course, the girls on their side watched Beaudenord out of the corners of their eyes, as well-taught kittens watch a mouse, without seeming to see it at all. With a certain satisfaction Beaudenord noted the bearing, manner, and appearance of the tall, well-gloved Alsatian servant in livery who brought three pairs of fur-lined overshoes for his mistresses.

"Never were two sisters more unlike than Isaure and Malvina. Malvina the elder was tall and dark-haired, Isaure was short and fair, and her features were finely and delicately cut, while her sister's were vigorous and striking. Isaure was one of those women who reign like queens through their weakness, such a woman as a schoolboy would feel it incumbent upon him to protect; Malvina was the Andalouse of Musset's poem. As the sisters stood together, Isaure looked like a miniature beside a portrait in oils.

"'She is rich!' exclaimed Godefroid, going back to Rastignac in the ballroom.

"'Who?'

"'That young lady.'

"'Oh, Isaure d'Aldrigger? Why, yes. The mother is a widow; Nucingen was once a clerk in her husband's bank at Strasbourg. Do you want to see them again? Just turn off a compliment for Mme. de Restaud; she is giving a ball the day after to-morrow; the Baroness d'Aldrigger and her two daughters will be there. You will have an invitation.'

"For three days Godefroid beheld Isaure in the camera obscura of his brain—*his* Isaure with her white camellias and the little ways she had with her head—saw her as you still see the bright thing on which you have been gazing after your eyes are shut, a picture grown somewhat smaller; a radiant, brightly colored vision flashing out of a vortex of darkness."

"Bixiou, you are dropping into phenomena, block us out our pictures," put in Couture.

"Here you are, gentlemen! Here is the picture you ordered!" (from the tones of Bixiou's voice, he evidently was posing as a waiter). "Finot! attention, one has to pull at your mouth as a jarvie pulls at his jade. In Mme. Theodora Marguerite Wilhelmine Adolphus (of the firm of Adolphus and Company, Mannheim), relict of the late Baron d'Aldrigger, you might expect to find a stout, comfortable German, compact and prudent, with a fair complexion mellowed to the tint of the foam on a pot of beer; and as to virtues, rich in all the patriarchal good qualities that Germany possesses—in romances, that is to say. Well, there was not a gray hair in the frisky ringlets that she wore on either side of her face; she was still as fresh and as brightly colored on the cheekbone as a Nuremberg doll; her eyes were lively and bright; a closely fitting, pointed bodice set off the slenderness of her waist. Her brow and temples were furrowed by a few involuntary wrinkles which, like Ninon, she would fain have banished from her head to her heel, but they persisted in tracing their zigzags in the more conspicuous place. The outlines of the nose had somewhat fallen away, and the tip had reddened, and this was the more awkward because it matched the color on the cheekbones.

"An only daughter and an heiress, spoiled by her father and mother, spoiled by her husband and the city of Stras-

bourg, spoiled still by two daughters who worshiped their mother, the Baroness d'Aldrigger indulged a taste for rose color, short petticoats, and a knot of ribbon at the point of the tightly fitting corselet bodice. Any Parisian meeting the Baroness on the boulevard would smile and condemn her outright; he does not admit any plea of extenuating circumstances, like a modern jury on a case of fratricide. A scoffer is always superficial, and in consequence cruel; the rascal never thinks of throwing the proper share of ridicule on society that made the individual what he is; for nature only makes dull animals of us, we owe the fool to artificial conditions."

"The thing that I admire about Bixiou is his completeness," said Blondet; "whenever he is not gibing at others, he is laughing at himself."

"I will be even with you for that, Blondet," returned Bixiou in a significant tone. "If the little Baroness was giddy, careless, selfish, and incapable in practical matters, she was not accountable for her sins; the responsibility is divided between the firm of Adolphus and Company of Mannheim and Baron d'Aldrigger with his blind love for his wife. The Baroness was as gentle as a lamb; she had a soft heart that was very readily moved; unluckily, the emotion never lasted long, but it was all the more frequently renewed.

"When the Baron died, for instance, the Shepherdess all but followed him to the tomb, so violent and sincere was her grief, but—next morning there were green peas at lunch, she was fond of green peas, the delicious green peas calmed the crisis. Her daughters and her servants loved her so blindly that the whole household rejoiced over a circumstance that enabled them to hide the dolorous spectacle of the funeral from the sorrowing Baroness. Isaure and Malvina would not allow their idolized mother to see their tears.

"While the Requiem was chanted, they diverted her thoughts to the choice of mourning dresses. While the coffin was placed in the huge, black and white, wax-besprinkled catafalque that does duty for some three thousand dead in the course of its career—so I was informed by a philosophically minded mute whom I once consulted on the point over a couple of glasses of *petit blanc*—while an indifferent choir was bawling the *Dies iræ,* and a no less indifferent priest mumbling the office for the dead, do you know what the friends of the departed were saying as, all dressed in black from head to foot, they sat or stood in the church? (Here is the picture you ordered.) Stay, do you see them?

"'How much do you suppose old d'Aldrigger will leave?' Desroches asked of Taillefer.—You remember Taillefer, that gave us the finest orgy ever known not long before he died?"

"But was Desroches an attorney in those days?"

"He was in treaty for a practice in 1822," said Couture. "It was a bold thing to do, for he was the son of a poor clerk who never made more than eighteen hundred francs a year, and his mother sold stamped paper. But he worked very hard from 1818 to 1822. He was Derville's fourth clerk when he came; and in 1819 he was second!"

"Desroches?"

"Yes. Desroches, like the rest of us,

once groveled in the poverty of Job. He grew so tired of wearing coats too tight and sleeves too short for him, that he swallowed down the law in desperation and had just bought a bare license. He was a licensed attorney, without a penny, or a client, or any friends beyond our set; and he was bound to pay interest on the purchase-money and the cautionary deposit besides."

"He used to make me feel as if I had met a tiger escaped from the Jardin des Plantes," said Couture. "He was lean and red-haired, his eyes were the color of Spanish snuff, and his complexion was harsh. He looked cold and phlegmatic. He was hard upon the widow, pitiless to the orphan, and a terror to his clerks; they were not allowed to waste a minute. Learned, crafty, double-faced, honey-tongued, never flying into a passion, rancorous in his judicial way."

"But there is goodness in him," cried Finot; "he is devoted to his friends. The first thing he did was to take Godeschal, Mariette's brother, as his head-clerk."

"At Paris," said Blondet, "there are attorneys of two shades. There is the honest man attorney; he abides within the province of the law, pushes on his cases, neglects no one, never runs after business, gives his clients his honest opinion, and makes them compromise on doubtful points—he is a Derville, in short. Then there is the starveling attorney, to whom anything seems good provided that he is sure of expenses; he will set, not mountains fighting, for he sells them, but planets; he will work to make the worse appear the better cause, and take advantage of a technical error to win the day for a rogue. If one of these fellows tries one of Maître Gonin's tricks once too often, the guild forces him to sell his connection. Desroches, our friend Desroches, understood the full resources of a trade carried on in a beggarly way enough by poor devils; he would buy up causes of men who feared to lose the day; he plunged into chicanery with a fixed determination to make money by it. He was right; he did his business very honestly. He found influence among men in public life by getting them out of awkward complications; there was our dear des Lupeaulx, for instance, whose position was so deeply compromised. And Desroches stood in need of influence; for when he began, he was anything but well looked on at the court, and he who took so much trouble to rectify the errors of his clients was often in trouble himself. See now, Bixiou, to go back to the subject—How came Desroches to be in the church?"

"'D'Aldrigger is leaving seven or eight hundred thousand francs,' Taillefer answered, addressing Desroches.

"'Oh, pooh, there is only one man who knows how much *they* are worth,' put in Werbrust, a friend of the deceased.

"'Who?'

"'That fat rogue Nucingen; he will go as far as the cemetery; d'Aldrigger was his master once, and out of gratitude he put the old man's capital into his business.'

"'The widow will soon feel a great difference.'

"'What do you mean?'

"'Well, d'Aldrigger was so fond of his wife. Now, don't laugh, people are looking at us.'

"'Look, here comes du Tillet; he is

very late. The epistle is just beginning.'

"'He will marry the eldest girl in all probability.'

"'Is it possible?' asked Desroches; 'why, he is tied more than ever to Mme. Roguin.'

"'*Tied*—he?—You do not know him.'

"'Do you know how Nucingen and du Tillet stand?' asked Desroches.

"'Like this,' said Taillefer; 'Nucingen is just the man to swallow down his old master's capital, and then to disgorge it.'

"'Ugh! ugh!' coughed Werbrust, 'these churches are confoundedly damp; ugh! ugh! What do you mean by "disgorge it"?'

"'Well, Nucingen knows that du Tillet has a lot of money; he wants to marry him to Malvina; but du Tillet is shy of Nucingen. To a looker-on, the game is good fun.'

"'What!' exclaimed Werbrust, 'is she old enough to marry? How quickly we grow old!'

"'Malvina d'Aldrigger is quite twenty years old, my dear fellow. Old d'Aldrigger was married in 1800. He gave some rather fine entertainments in Strasbourg at the time of his wedding, and afterwards when Malvina was born. That was in 1801 at the peace of Amiens, and here are we in the year 1823, Daddy Werbrust! In those days everything was Ossianized; he called his daughter Malvina. Six years afterwards there was a rage for chivalry, *Partant pour la Syrie* —a pack of nonsense—and he christened his second daughter Isaure. She is seventeen. So there are two daughters to marry.'

"'The women will not have a penny left in ten years' time,' said Werbrust, speaking to Desroches in a confidential tone.

"'There is d'Aldrigger's man-servant, the old fellow bellowing away at the back of the church; he has been with them since the two young ladies were children, and he is capable of anything to keep enough together for them to live upon,' said Taillefer.

"*Dies iræ!* (from the minor canons.) *Dies illa!* (from the choristers.)

"'Good-day, Werbrust' (from Taillefer), 'the *dies iræ* puts me too much in mind of my poor boy.'

"'I shall go too; it is too damp in here,' said Werbrust.

"*In favilla.*

"'A few halfpence, kind gentlemen!' (from the beggars at the door.)

"'For the expenses of the church!' (from the beadle, with a rattling clatter of the money-box.)

"*Amen* (from the choristers.)

"'What did he die of?' (from a friend.)

"'He broke a blood-vessel in the heel' (from an inquisitive wag.)

"'Who is dead?' (from a passer-by.)

"'The Président de Montesquieu' (from a relative.)

"The sacristan to the poor, 'Get away, all of you; the money for you has been given to us; don't ask for any more.'"

"Done to the life!" cried Couture. And indeed it seemed to us that we heard all that went on in the church. Bixiou imitated everything, even the shuffling sound of the feet of the men that carried the coffin over the stone floor.

"There are poets and romancers and writers that say many fine things about Parisian manners," continued Bixiou, "but that is what really happens at a

funeral. Ninety-nine out of a hundred that come to pay their respects to some poor devil departed, get together and talk business or pleasure in the middle of the church. To see some poor little touch of real sorrow, you need an impossible combination of circumstances. And, after all, is there such a thing as grief without a thought of self in it?"

"Ugh!" said Blondet. "Nothing is less respected than death; is it that there is nothing less respectable?"

"It is so common!" resumed Bixiou. "When the service was over, Nucingen and du Tillet went to the graveside. The old man-servant walked; Nucingen and du Tillet were put at the head of the procession of mourning coaches.—'Goot, mein goot friend,' said Nucingen as they turned into the boulevard. 'It ees a goot time to marry Malfina; you will be der brodector off dat boor family vat ees in tears; you vill haf ein family, a home off your own; you vill haf a house ready vurnished, and Malfina is truly ein dreashure.'"

"I seem to hear that old Robert Macaire of a Nucingen himself," said Finot.

"'A charming girl,' said Ferdinand du Tillet in a cool, unenthusiastic tone," Bixiou continued.

"Just du Tillet himself summed up in a word!" cried Couture.

"'Those that do not know her may think her plain,' pursued du Tillet, 'but she has character, I admit.'

"'Und ein herz, dot is the pest of die pizness, mein dear poy; she vould make you an indelligent und defoted vife. In our beastly pizness, nopody cares to know who lifs or dies; it is a crate plessing gif a mann kann put drust in his vife's heart. Mein Telvine prought me more as a million, as you know, but I should gladly gif her for Malfina dot haf not so pig a *dot*.'

"'But how much has she?'

"'I do not know precisely; boot she haf somdings.'

"'Yes, she has a mother with a great liking for rose-color,' said du Tillet; and with that epigram he cut Nucingen's diplomatic efforts short.

"After dinner the Baron de Nucingen informed Wilhelmine Adolphus that she had barely four hundred thousand francs deposited with him. The daughter of Adolphus of Mannheim, thus reduced to an income of twenty-four thousand livres, lost herself in arithmetical exercises that muddled her wits.

"'I have *always* had six thousand francs for our dress allowance,' she said to Malvina. 'Why, how did your father find money? We shall have nothing now with twenty-four thousand francs; it is destitution! Oh! if my father could see me so come down in the world, it would kill him if he were not dead already! Poor Wilhelmine!' and she began to cry.

"Malvina, puzzled to know how to comfort her mother, represented to her that she was still young and pretty, that rose-color still became her, that she could continue to go to the Opéra and the Bouffons, where Mme. de Nucingen had a box. And so with visions of gayeties, dances, music, pretty dresses, and social success, the Baroness was lulled to sleep and pleasant dreams in the blue, silk-curtained bed in the charming room next to the chamber in which Jean Baptiste, Baron d'Aldrigger, had breathed his last but two nights ago.

"Here in a few words is the Baron's

history. During his lifetime that worthy Alsatian accumulated about three millions of francs. In 1800, at the age of thirty-six, in the apogee of a fortune made during the Revolution, he made a marriage partly of ambition, partly of inclination, with the heiress of the family of Adolphus of Mannheim. Wilhelmine, being the idol of her whole family, naturally inherited their wealth after some ten years. Next, d'Aldrigger's fortune being doubled, he was transformed into a Baron by His Majesty, Emperor and King, and forthwith became a fanatical admirer of the great man to whom he owed his title. Wherefore, between 1814 and 1815 he ruined himself by a too serious belief in the sun of Austerlitz. Honest Alsatian as he was, he did not suspend payment, nor did he give his creditors shares in doubtful concerns by way of settlement. He paid everything over the counter, and retired from business, thoroughly deserving Nucingen's comment on his behavior—'Honest but stoobid.'

"All claims satisfied, there remained to him five hundred thousand francs and certain receipts for sums advanced to that Imperial Government which had ceased to exist. 'She vat komms of too much pelief in Nappolion,' said he, when he had realized all his capital.

"When you have been one of the leading men in a place, how are you to remain in it when your estate has dwindled? D'Aldrigger, like all ruined provincials, removed to Paris, there intrepidly wore the tricolor braces embroidered with Imperial eagles, and lived entirely in Bonapartist circles. His capital he handed over to Nucingen, who gave him eight per cent. upon it, and took over the loans to the Imperial Government at a mere sixty per cent. of reduction; wherefore d'Aldrigger squeezed Nucingen's hand and said, 'I knew dot in you I should find de heart of ein Elzatian.'

"(Nucingen was paid in full through our friend des Lupeaulx.) Well fleeced as d'Aldrigger had been, he still possessed an income of forty-four thousand francs; but his mortification was further complicated by the spleen which lies in wait for the business man so soon as he retires from business. He set himself, noble heart, to sacrifice himself to his wife, now that her fortune was lost, that fortune of which she had allowed herself to be despoiled so easily, after the manner of a girl entirely ignorant of money matters. Mme. d'Aldrigger accordingly missed not a single pleasure to which she had been accustomed; any void caused by the loss of Strasbourg acquaintances was speedily filled, and more than filled, with Paris gayeties. Even then, as now, the Nucingens lived at the higher end of financial society, and the Baron de Nucingen made it a point of honor to treat the honest banker well. His disinterested virtue looked well in the Nucingen salon.

"Every winter dipped into d'Aldrigger's principal, but he did not venture to remonstrate with his pearl of a Wilhelmine. His was the most ingenuous, unintelligent tenderness in the world. A good man, but a stupid one! 'What will become of them when I am gone?' he said, as he lay dying; and when he was left alone for a moment with Wirth, his old man-servant, he struggled for breath to bid him take care of his mistress and her two daughters, as if the one reason-

able being in the house were this Alsatian Caleb Balderstone.

"Three years afterwards, in 1826, Isaure was twenty years old, and Malvina still unmarried. Malvina had gone into society, and in course of time discovered for herself how superficial their friendships were, how accurately everyone was weighed and appraised. Like most girls that have been 'well brought up,' as we say, Malvina had no idea of the mechanism of life, of the importance of money, of the difficulty of obtaining it, of the prices of things. And so, for six years, every lesson that she had learned had been a painful one for her.

"D'Aldrigger's four hundred thousand francs were carried to the credit of the Baroness's account with the firm of Nucingen (she was her husband's creditor for twelve hundred thousand francs under her marriage settlement), and when in any difficulty the Shepherdess of the Alps dipped into her capital as though it were inexhaustible.

"When our pigeon first advanced towards his dove, Nucingen, knowing the Baroness's character, must have spoken plainly to Malvina on the financial position. At that time three hundred thousand francs were left; the income of twenty-four thousand francs was reduced to eighteen thousand. Wirth had kept up this state of things for three years! After that confidential interview, Malvina put down the carriage, sold the horses, and dismissed the coachman, without her mother's knowledge. The furniture, now ten years old, could not be renewed, but it all faded together, and for those that like harmony the effect was not half bad. The Baroness herself, that so well preserved flower, began to look like the last solitary frost-touched rose on a November bush. I myself watched the slow decline of luxury by halftones and semitones! Frightful, upon my honor! It was my last trouble of the kind; afterwards I said to myself, 'It is silly to care so much about other people.' But while I was in the civil service, I was fool enough to take a personal interest in the houses where I dined; I used to stand up for them; I would say no ill of them myself; I—oh! I was a child.

"Well, when the *ci-devant* pearl's daughter put the state of the case before her, 'Oh, my poor children,' cried she, 'who will make my dresses now? I cannot afford new bonnets; I cannot see visitors here nor go out.'—Now by what token do you know that a man is in love?" said Bixiou, interrupting himself. "The question is, whether Beaudenord was genuinely in love with the fair-haired girl."

"He neglects his interests," said Couture.

"He changes his shirt three times a day," from Finot.

"There is another question to settle first," opined Blondet; "a man of more than ordinary ability, can he, and ought he, to fall in love?"

"My friends," resumed Bixiou, with a sentimental air, "there is a kind of man who, when he feels that he is in peril of falling in love, will snap his fingers or fling away his cigar (as the case may be) with a 'Pooh! there are other women in the world.' Beware of that man for a dangerous reptile. Still, the Government may employ that citizen somewhere in the Foreign Office. Blondet, I

call your attention to the fact that this Godefroid had thrown up diplomacy."

"Well, he was absorbed," said Blondet. "Love gives the fool his one chance of growing great."

"Blondet, Blondet, how is it that we are so poor?" cried Bixiou.

"And why is Finot so rich?" returned Blondet. "I will tell you how it is; there, my son, we understand each other. Come, here is Finot filling up my glass as if I had carried in his firewood. At the end of dinner one ought to sip one's wine slowly.—Well?"

"Thou hast said. The absorbed Godefroid became fully acquainted with the family—the tall Malvina, the frivolous Baroness, and the little lady of the dance. He became a servant after the most conscientious and restricted fashion. He was not scared away by the cadaverous remains of opulence; not he! by degrees he became accustomed to the threadbare condition of things. It never struck the young man that the green silk damask and white ornaments in the drawing-room were shabby, spotted, and old-fashioned, and that the room needed refurnishing. The curtains, the teatable, the knickknacks on the chimneypiece, the rococo chandelier, the Eastern carpet with the pile worn down to the thread, the pianoforte, the little flowered china cups, the fringed serviettes so full of holes that they looked like open work in the Spanish fashion, the green sitting-room with the Baroness's blue bedroom beyond it,—it was all sacred, all dear to him. It is only your stupid woman, brilliant with the brilliant beauty that throws heart, brain, and soul into the shade, who can inspire forgetfulness like this; a clever woman never abuses her advantages; she must be small-natured and silly to gain such a hold upon a man. Beaudenord actually loved the solemn old Wirth—he has told me so himself!

"That old rogue regarded his future master with the awe which a good Catholic feels for the Eucharist. Honest Wirth was a kind of Gaspard, a beer-drinking German sheathing his cunning in good-nature, much as a cardinal in the Middle Ages kept his dagger up his sleeve. Wirth saw a husband for Isaure, and accordingly proceeded to surround Godefroid with the mazy circumlocutions of his Alsatian's geniality, that most adhesive of all known varieties of bird-lime.

"Mme. d'Aldrigger was radically 'improper.' She thought love the most natural thing imaginable. When Isaure and Malvina went out together to the Champs Élysées or the Tuileries, where they were sure to meet the young men of their set, she would simply say, 'A pleasant time to you, dear girls.' Their friends among men, the only persons who might have slandered the sisters, championed them; for the extraordinary liberty permitted in the d'Aldriggers' salon made it unique in Paris. Vast wealth would scarcely have procured such evenings, the talk was good on any subject; dress was not insisted upon; you felt so much at home there that you could ask for supper. The sisters corresponded as they pleased, and quietly read their letters by their mother's side; it never occurred to the Baroness to interfere in any way; the adorable woman gave the girls the full benefits of her selfishness, and in a certain sense selfish persons are the easiest to live

with; they hate trouble, and therefore do not trouble other people; they never beset the lives of their fellow-creatures with thorny advice and captious fault-finding; nor do they torment you with the waspish solicitude of excessive affection that must know all things and rule all things——"

"This comes home," said Blondet, "but, my dear fellow, this is not telling a story, this is *blague*——"

"Blondet, if you were not tipsy, I should really feel hurt! He is the one serious literary character among us; for his benefit, I honor you by treating you like men of taste, I am distilling my tale for you, and now he criticises me! There is no greater proof of intellectual sterility, my friends, than the piling up of facts. *Le Misanthrope,* that supreme comedy, shows us that art consists in the power of building a palace on a needle's point. The gist of my idea is in the fairy wand which can turn the Desert into an Interlaken in ten seconds (precisely the time required to empty this glass). Would you rather that I fired a story off at you like a cannon-ball, or a commander-in-chief's report? We chat and laugh; and this journalist, a bibliophobe when sober, expects me, forsooth, when he is drunk, to teach my tongue to move at the dull jog-trot of a printed book." (Here he affected to weep.) "Woe unto the French imagination when men fain would blunt the needle points of her pleasant humor! *Dies iræ!* Let us weep for *Candide.* Long live the *Kritik of Pure Reason, La Symbolique,* and the systems in five closely packed volumes, printed by Germans, who little suspect that the gist of the matter has been known in Paris since 1750, and crystallized in a few trenchant words—the diamonds of our national thought. Blondet is driving a hearse to his own suicide; Blondet, forsooth; who manufactures newspaper accounts of the last words of all the great men that die without saying anything!"

"Come, get on," put in Finot.

"It was my intention to explain to you in what the happiness of a man consists when he is not a shareholder (out of compliment to Couture). Well, now, do you not see at what a price Godefroid secured the greatest happiness of a young man's dream? He was trying to understand Isaure, by way of making sure that she should understand him. Things which comprehend one another must needs be similar. Infinity and Nothingness, for instance, are like; everything that lies between the two is like neither. Nothingness is stupidity; genius, Infinity. The lovers wrote each other the stupidest letters imaginable, putting down various expressions then in fashion upon bits of scented paper: 'Angel! Æolian harp! with thee I shall be complete! There is a heart in my man's breast! Weak woman, poor me!' all the latest heart-frippery. It was Godefroid's wont to stay in a drawing-room for a bare ten minutes; he talked without any pretension to the women in it, and at those times they thought him very clever. In short, judge of his absorption; Joby, his horses and carriages, became secondary interests in his life. He was never happy except in the depths of a snug settee opposite the Baroness, by the dark-green porphyry chimneypiece, watching Isaure, taking tea, and chatting with the little circle of friends that dropped in every evening

between eleven and twelve in the Rue Joubert. You could play bouillotte there safely. (I always won.) Isaure sat with one little foot thrust out in its black satin shoe; Godefroid would gaze and gaze, and stay till everyone else was gone, and say, 'Give me your shoe!' and Isaure would put her little foot on a chair and take it off and give it to him, with a glance, one of those glances that—in short, you understand.

"At length Godefroid discovered a great mystery in Malvina. Whenever du Tillet knocked at the door, the live red that colored Malvina's face said 'Ferdinand!' When the poor girl's eyes fell on that two-footed tiger, they lighted up like a brazier fanned by a current of air. When Ferdinand drew her away to the window or a side table, she betrayed her secret infinite joy. It is a rare and beautiful thing to see a woman so much in love that she loses her cunning to be strange, and you can read her heart; as rare (dear me!) in Paris as the Singing Flower in the Indies. But in spite of a friendship dating from the d'Aldriggers' first appearance at the Nucingens', Ferdinand did not marry Malvina. Our ferocious friend was not apparently jealous of Desroches, who paid assiduous court to the young lady; Desroches wanted to pay off the rest of the purchase-money due for his connection; Malvina could not well have less than fifty thousand crowns, he thought, and so the lawyer was fain to play the lover. Malvina, deeply humiliated as she was by du Tillet's carelessness, loved him too well to shut the door upon him. With her, an enthusiastic, highly wrought, sensitive girl, love sometimes got the better of pride, and pride again overcame wounded love. Our friend Ferdinand, cool and self-possessed, accepted her tenderness, and breathed the atmosphere with the quiet enjoyment of a tiger licking the blood that dyes his throat. He would come to make sure of it with new proofs; he never allowed two days to pass without a visit to the Rue Joubert.

"At that time the rascal possessed something like eighteen hundred thousand francs; money must have weighed very little with him in the question of marriage; and he had not merely been proof against Malvina, he had resisted the Barons de Nucingen and de Rastignac; though both of them had set him galloping at the rate of seventy-five leagues a day, with outriders, regardless of expense, through mazes of their cunning devices—and with never a clew of thread.

"Godefroid could not refrain from saying a word to his future sister-in-law as to her ridiculous position between a banker and an attorney.

"'You mean to read me a lecture on the subject of Ferdinand,' she said frankly, 'to know the secret between us. Dear Godefroid, never mention this again. Ferdinand's birth, antecedents, and fortune count for nothing in this, so you may think it is something extraordinary.' A few days afterwards, however, Malvina took Godefroid apart to say, 'I do not think that Desroches is sincere' (such is the instinct of love); 'he would like to marry me, and he is paying court to some tradesman's daughter as well. I should very much like to know whether I am a second shift, and whether marriage is a matter of money with him.' The fact was that

Desroches, deep as he was, could not make out du Tillet, and was afraid that he might marry Malvina. So the fellow had secured his retreat. His position was intolerable, he was scarcely paying his expenses and interest on the debt. Women understand nothing of these things; for them, love is always a millionaire."

"But since neither du Tillet nor Desroches married her, just explain Ferdinand's motive," said Finot.

"Motive?" repeated Bixiou; "why, this. General Rule: A girl that has once given away her slipper, even if she refused it for ten years, is never married by the man who——"

"Bosh!" interrupted Blondet, "one reason for loving is the fact that one has loved. His motive? Here it is. General Rule: Do not marry as a sergeant when some day you may be Duke of Dantzig and Marshal of France. Now, see what a match du Tillet has made since then. He married one of the Comte de Granville's daughters, into one of the oldest families in the French magistracy."

"Desroches' mother had a friend, a druggist's wife," continued Bixiou. "Said druggist had retired with a fat fortune. These druggist folk have absurdly crude notions; by way of giving his daughter a good education, he had sent her to a boarding-school! Well, Matifat meant the girl to marry well, on the strength of two hundred thousand francs, good hard coin with no scent of drugs about it."

"Florine's Matifat?" asked Blondet.

"Well, yes. Lousteau's Matifat; ours, in fact. The Matifats, even then lost to us, had gone to live in the Rue du Cherche-Midi, as far as may be from the Rue des Lombards, where their money was made. For my own part, I had cultivated those Matifats. While I served my time in the galleys of the law, when I was cooped up for eight hours out of the twenty-four with nincompoops of the first water, I saw queer characters enough to convince myself that all is not dead-level even in obscure places, and that in the flattest inanity you may chance upon an angle. Yes, dear boy, such and such a philistine is to such another as Rafael is to Natoire.

"Mme. Desroches, the widowed mother, had long ago planned this marriage for her son, in spite of a tremendous obstacle which took the shape of one Cochin, Matifat's partner's son, a young clerk in the audit department. M. and Mme. Matifat were of the opinion that an attorney's position 'gave some guarantee for a wife's happiness,' to use their own expression; and as for Desroches, he was prepared to fall in with his mother's views in case he could do no better for himself. Wherefore, he kept up his acquaintance with the druggists in the Rue du Cherche-Midi.

"To put another kind of happiness before you, you should have a description of these shopkeepers, made and female. They rejoiced in the possession of a handsome ground floor and a strip of garden; for amusement, they watched a little squirt of water, no bigger than a cornstalk, perpetually rising and falling upon a small round freestone slab in the middle of a basin some six feet across; they would rise early of a morning to see if the plants in the garden had grown in the night; they had nothing to do, they were restless, they dressed for the sake of dressing, bored

themselves at the theater, and were forever going to and fro between Paris and Luzarches, where they had a country house. I have dined there.

"Once they tried to quiz me, Blondet. I told them a long-winded story that lasted from nine o'clock till midnight, one tale inside another. I had just brought my twenty-ninth personage upon the scene (the newspapers have plagiarized with their 'continued in our next'), when old Matifat, who as host still held out, snored like the rest, after blinking for five minutes. Next day they all complimented me upon the ending of my tale!

"These tradespeople's society consisted of M. and Mme. Cochin, Mme. Desroches, and a young Popinot, still in the drug business, who used to bring them news of the Rue des Lombards. (You know him, Finot.) Mme. Matifat loved the arts; she bought lithographs, chromo-lithographs, and colored prints, —all the cheapest things she could lay her hands on. The Sieur Matifat amused himself by looking into new business speculations, investing a little capital now and again for the sake of the excitement. Florine had cured him of his taste for the Regency style of thing. One saying of his will give you some idea of the depths in my Matifat. 'Art *thou* going to bed, my nieces?' he used to say when he wished them good-night, because (as he explained) he was afraid of hurting their feelings with the more formal 'you.'

"The daughter was a girl with no manner at all. She looked rather like a superior sort of housemaid. She could get through a sonata, she wrote a pretty English hand, knew French grammar and orthography—a complete commercial education, in short. She was impatient enough to be married and leave the paternal roof, finding it as dull at home as a lieutenant finds the night-watch at sea; at the same time, it should be said that her watch lasted through the whole twenty-four hours. Desroches or Cochin junior, a notary or a life-guardsman, or a sham English lord,—any husband would have suited her. As she so obviously knew nothing of life, I took pity upon her, I determined to reveal the great secret of it. But, pooh! the Matifats shut their doors on me. The bourgeois and I shall never understand each other."

"She married General Gouraud," said Finot.

"In forty-eight hours, Godefroid de Beaudenord, late of the diplomatic corps, saw through the Matifats and their nefarious designs," returned Bixiou. "Rastignac happened to be chatting with the frivolous Baroness when Godefroid came in to give his report to Malvina. A word here and there reached his ear; he guessed the matter on foot, more particularly from Malvina's look of satisfaction that it was as she had suspected. Then Rastignac actually stopped on till two o'clock in the morning. And yet there are those that call him selfish! Beaudenord took his departure when the Baroness went to bed.

"As soon as Rastignac was left alone with Malvina, he spoke in a fatherly, good-humored fashion. 'Dear child, please to bear in mind that a poor fellow, heavy with sleep, has been drinking tea to keep himself awake till two o'clock in the morning, all for a chance of saying a solemn word of advice to

you—Marry! Do not be too particular; do not brood over your feelings; never mind the sordid schemes of men that have one foot here and another in the Matifats' house; do not stop to think at all: Marry!—When a girl marries, it means that the man whom she marries undertakes to maintain her in a more or less good position in life, and at any rate her comfort is assured. I know the world. Girls, mammas and grandmammas are all of them hypocrites when they fly off into sentiment over a question of marriage. Nobody really thinks of anything but a good position. If a mother marries her daughter well, she says that she has made an excellent bargain.' Here Rastignac unfolded his theory of marriage, which to his way of thinking is a business arrangement, with a view to making life tolerable; and ended up with, 'I do not ask to know your secret, Malvina; I know it already. Men talk things over among themselves, just as you women talk after you leave the dinner-table. This is all I have to say: Marry. If you do not, remember that I begged you to marry, here, in this room, this evening!'

"There was a certain ring in Rastignac's voice which compelled, not attention, but reflection. There was something startling in his insistence; something that went, as Rastignac meant that it should, to the quick of Malvina's intelligence. She thought over the counsel again next day, and vainly asked herself why it had been given."

Couture broke in. "In all these tops that you have set spinning, I see nothing at all like the beginnings of Rastignac's fortune," said he. "You apparently take us for Matifats multiplied by half a dozen bottles of champagne."

"We are just coming to it," returned Bixiou. "You have followed the course of all the rivulets which make up that forty thousand livres a year which so many people envy. By this time Rastignac held the threads of all these lives in his hand."

"Desroches, the Matifats, Beaudenord, the d'Aldriggers, d'Aiglemont?"

"Yes, and a hundred others," assented Bixiou.

"Oh, come now, how?" cried Finot. "I know a few things, but I cannot see a glimpse of an answer to this riddle."

"Blondet has roughly given you the account of Nucingen's first two suspensions of payment; now for the third, with full details.—After the peace of 1815, Nucingen grasped an idea which some of us only fully understood later, to wit, that capital is a power only when you are very much richer than other people. In his own mind, he was jealous of the Rothschilds. He had five millions of francs, he wanted ten. He knew a way to make thirty millions with ten, while with five he could only make fifteen. So he made up his mind to operate a third suspension of payment. About that time, the great man hit on the idea of indemnifying his creditors with paper of purely fictitious value and keeping their coin. On the market, a great idea of this sort is not expressed in precisely this cut-and-dried way. Such an arrangement consists in giving a lot of grown-up children a small pie in exchange for a gold piece; and, like children of a smaller growth, they prefer the pie to the gold piece, not suspecting

that they might have a couple of hundred pies for it."

"What is all this about, Bixiou?" cried Couture. "Nothing more *bonâ fide*. Not a week passes but pies are offered to the public for a louis. But who compels the public to take them? Are they not perfectly free to make inquiries?"

"You would rather have it made compulsory to take up shares, would you?" asked Blondet.

"No," said Finot. "Where would the talent come in?"

"Very good for Finot."

"Who put him up to it?" asked Couture.

"The fact was," continued Bixiou, "that Nucingen had twice had the luck to present the public (quite unintentionally) with a pie that turned out to be worth more than the money he received for it. That unlucky good luck gave him qualms of conscience. A course of such luck is fatal to a man in the long run. This time he meant to make no mistake of this sort; he waited ten years for an opportunity of issuing negotiable securities which should seem on the face of it to be worth something, while as a matter of fact——"

"But if you look at banking in that light," broke in Couture, "no sort of business would be possible. More than one *bonâ fide* banker, backed up by a *bonâ fide* government, has induced the hardest-headed men on 'Change to take up stock which was bound to fall within a given time. You have seen better than that. Have you not seen stock created with the concurrence of a government to pay the interest upon older stock, so as to keep things going and tide over the difficulty? These operations were more or less like Nucingen's settlements."

"The thing may look queer on a small scale," said Blondet, "but on a large we call it finance. There are high-handed proceedings criminal between man and man that amount to nothing when spread out over any number of men, much as a drop of prussic acid becomes harmless in a pail of water. You take a man's life, you are guillotined. But if, for any political conviction whatsoever, you take five hundred lives, political crimes are respected. You take five thousand francs out of my desk; to the hulks you go. But with a sop cleverly pushed into the jaws of a thousand speculators, you can cram the stock of any bankrupt republic or monarchy down their throats; even if the loan has been floated, as Couture says, to pay the interest on that very same national debt. Nobody can complain. These are the real principles of the present Golden Age."

"When the stage machinery is so huge," continued Bixiou, "a good many puppets are required. In the first place, Nucingen had purposely and with his eyes open invested his five millions in an American investment, foreseeing that the profits would not come in until it was too late. The firm of Nucingen deliberately emptied its coffers. Any liquidation ought to be brought about naturally. In deposits belonging to private individuals and other investments, the firm possessed about six millions of capital altogether. Among those private individuals was the Baronesse d'Aldrigger with her three hundred thousand francs, Beaudenord with four hundred thousand, d'Aiglemont with a million,

Matifat with three hundred thousand, Charles Grandet (who married Mlle. d'Aubrion) with half a million, and so forth, and so forth.

"Now, if Nucingen had himself brought out a joint-stock company, with the shares of which he proposed to indemnify his creditors after more or less ingenious maneuvering, he might perhaps have been suspected. He set about it more cunningly than that. He made someone else put up the machinery that was to play the part of the Mississippi scheme in Law's system: Nucingen can make the longest-headed men work out his schemes for him without confiding a word to them; it is his peculiar talent. Nucingen just let fall a hint to du Tillet of the pyramidal, triumphant notion of bringing out a joint-stock enterprise with capital sufficient to pay very high dividends for a time. Tried for the first time, in days when noodles with capital were plentiful, the plan was pretty sure to end in a run upon the shares, and consequently in a profit for the banker that issued them. You must remember that this happened in 1826.

"Du Tillet, struck though he was by an idea both pregnant and ingenious, naturally bethought himself that if the enterprise failed, the blame must fall upon somebody. For which reason, it occurred to him to put forward a figure-head director in charge of his commercial machinery. At this day you know the secret of the firm of Claparon and Company, founded by du Tillet, one of the finest inventions——"

"Yes," said Blondet, "the responsible editor in business matters, the instigator, and scapegoat; but we know better than that nowadays. We put, 'Apply at the offices of the Company, such and such a number, such and such a street,' where the public find a staff of clerks in green caps, about as pleasing to behold as broker's men."

"Nucingen," pursued Bixiou, "had supported the firm of Charles Claparon and Company with all his credit. There were markets in which you might safely put a million francs' worth of Claparon's paper. So du Tillet proposed to bring his firm of Claparon to the fore. So said, so done. In 1825 the shareholder was still an unsophisticated being. There was no such thing as cash lying at call. Managing directors did not pledge themselves not to put their own shares upon the market; they kept no deposit with the Bank of France; they guaranteed nothing. They did not even condescend to explain to shareholders the exact limits of their liabilities when they informed them that the directors, in their goodness, refrained from asking any more than a thousand, or five hundred, or even two hundred and fifty francs. It was not given out that the experiment *in ære publico* was not meant to last for more than seven, five, or even three years, so that shareholders would not have long to wait for the catastrophe. It was in the childhood of the art. Promoters did not even publish the gigantic prospectuses with which they stimulate the imagination, and at the same time make demands for money of all and sundry."

"That only comes when nobody wishes to part with money," said Couture.

"In short, there was no competition in investments," continued Bixiou. "Papier-mâché manufacturers, cotton printers, zinc-rollers, theaters, and newspapers as

yet did not hurl themselves like hunting dogs upon their quarry—the expiring shareholder. 'Nice things in shares,' as Couture says, put thus artlessly before the public, and backed up by the opinions of experts ('the princes of science'), were negotiated shamefacedly in the silence and shadow of the Bourse. Lynx-eyed speculators used to execute (financially speaking) the air *Calumny* out of *The Barber of Seville*. They went about *piano, piano,* making known the merits of the concern through the medium of stock-exchange gossip. They could only exploit the victim in his own house, on the Bourse, or in company; so they reached him by means of the skillfully created rumor which grew till it reached a *tutti* of a quotation in four figures——"

"And as we can say anything among ourselves," said Couture, "I will go back to the last subject."

"Vous êtes orfèvre, M. Josse!" cried Finot.

"Finot will always be classic, constitutional, and pedantic," commented Blondet.

"Yes," rejoined Couture, on whose account Cérizet had just been condemned on a criminal charge. "I maintain that the new way is infinitely less fraudulent, less ruinous, more straightforward than the old. Publicity means time for reflection and inquiry. If here and there a shareholder is taken in, he has himself to blame, nobody sells him a pig in a poke. The manufacturing industry——"

"Ah!" exclaimed Bixiou, "here comes industry——"

"——is a gainer by it," continued Couture, taking no notice of the interruption. "Every government that meddles with commerce and cannot leave it free, sets about an expensive piece of folly; State interference ends in a *maximum* or a monopoly. To my thinking, few things can be more in conformity with the principles of free trade than joint-stock companies. State interference means that you try to regulate the relations of principal and interest, which is absurd. In business, generally speaking, the profits are in proportion to the risks. What does it matter to the State how money is set circulating, provided that it is always in circulation? What does it matter who is rich or who is poor, provided that there is a constant quantity of rich people to be taxed? Joint-stock companies, limited liability companies, every sort of enterprise that pays a dividend, has been carried on for twenty years in England, commercially the first country in the world. Nothing passes unchallenged there; the Houses of Parliament hatch some twelve hundred laws every session, yet no member of Parliament has ever yet raised an objection to the system——"

"A cure for plethora of the strong box. Purely vegetable remedy," put in Bixiou, *"les carottes"* (gambling speculation).

"Look here!" cried Couture, firing up at this. "You have ten thousand francs. You invest it in ten shares of a thousand francs each in ten different enterprises. You are swindled nine times out of the ten—as a matter of fact you are not, the public is a match for anybody, but say that you are swindled, and only one affair turns out well (by accident!—oh, granted!—it was not done on purpose—there, chaff away!). Very well, the punter that has the sense to

divide up his stakes in this way hits on a splendid investment, like those did who took shares in the Wortschin mines. Gentlemen, let us admit among ourselves that those who call out are hypocrites, desperately vexed because they have no good ideas of their own, and neither power to advertise nor skill to exploit a business. You will not have long to wait for proof. In a very short time you will see the aristocracy, the Court, and public men descend into speculation in serried columns; you will see that their claws are longer, their morality more crooked than ours, while they have not our good points. What a head a man must have if he has to found a business in times when the shareholder is as covetous and keen as the inventor! What a great magnetizer must he be that can create a Claparon and hit upon expedients never tried before! Do you know the moral of it all? Our age is no better than we are; we live in an era of greed; no one troubles himself about the intrinsic value of a thing if he can only make a profit on it by selling it to somebody else; so he passes it on to his neighbor. The shareholder that thinks he sees a chance of making money is just as covetous as the founder that offers him the opportunity of making it."

"Isn't he fine, our Couture? Isn't he fine?" exclaimed Bixiou, turning to Blondet. "He will ask us next to erect statues to him as a benefactor of the species."

"It would lead people to conclude that the fool's money is the wise man's patrimony by divine right," said Blondet.

"Gentlemen," cried Couture, "let us have our laugh out here to make up for all the times when we must listen gravely to solemn nonsense justifying laws passed on the spur of the moment."

"He is right," said Blondet. "What times we live in, gentlemen! When the fire of intelligence appears among us, it is promptly quenched by haphazard legislation. Almost all our lawgivers come up from little parishes where they studied human nature through the medium of the newspapers; forthwith they shut down the safety-valve, and when the machinery blows up there is weeping and gnashing of teeth! We do nothing nowadays but pass penal laws and levy taxes. Will you have the sum of it all?—There is no religion left in the State!"

"Oh, bravo, Blondet!" cried Bixiou, "thou hast set thy finger on the weak spot. Meddlesome taxation has lost us more victories here in France than the vexatious chances of war. I once spent seven years in the hulks of a government department, chained with bourgeois to my bench. There was a clerk in the office, a man with a head on his shoulders; he had set his mind upon making a sweeping reform of the whole fiscal system—ah, well, we took the conceit out of him nicely. France might have been too prosperous, you know; she might have amused herself by conquering Europe again; we acted in the interests of the peace of nations. I slew Rabourdin with a caricature."[1]

"By *religion* I do not mean cant; I use the word in its wide political sense," rejoined Blondet.

"Explain your meaning," said Finot.

"Here it is," returned Blondet. "There

[1]See *Les Employés.*

has been a good deal said about affairs at Lyons; about the Republic cannonaded in the streets; well, there was not a word of truth in it all. The Republic took up the riots, just as an insurgent snatches up a rifle. The truth is queer and profound, I can tell you. The Lyons trade is a soulless trade. They will not weave a yard of silk unless they have the order and are sure of payment. If orders fall off, the workmen may starve; they can scarcely earn a livng, convicts are better off. After the Revolution of July, the distress reached such a pitch that the Lyons weavers—the *canuts,* as they call them—hoisted the flag, 'Bread or Death!' a proclamation of a kind which compels the attention of a government. It was really brought about by the cost of living at Lyons; Lyons must build theaters and become a metropolis, forsooth, and the octroi duties accordingly were insanely high. The Republicans got wind of this bread riot, they organized the *canuts* in two camps, and fought among themselves. Lyons had her Three Days, but order was restored, and the silk weavers went back to their dens. Hitherto the *canut* had been honest; the silk for his work was weighed out to him in hanks, and he brought back the same weight of woven tissue; now he made up his mind that the silk merchants were oppressing him; he put honesty out at the door and rubbed oil on his fingers. He still brought back weight for weight, but he sold the silk represented by the oil; and the French silk trade has suffered from a plague of 'greased silks,' which might have ruined Lyons and a whole branch of French commerce. The masters and the government, instead of removing the causes of the evil, simply drove it in with a violent external application. They ought to have sent a clever man to Lyons, one of those men that are said to have no principle, an Abbé Terray; but they looked at the affair from a military point of view. The result of the troubles is a *gros de Naples* at forty sous per yard; the silk is sold at this day, I dare say, and the masters no doubt have hit upon some new check upon the men. This method of manufacturing without looking ahead ought never to have existed in the country where one of the greatest citizens that France has ever known ruined himself to keep six thousand weavers in work without orders. Richard Lenoir fed them, and the government was thick-headed enough to allow him to suffer from the fall of the prices of textile fabrics brought about by the Revolution of 1814. Richard Lenoir is the one case of a merchant that deserves a statue. And yet the subscription set on foot for him has no subscribers, while the fund for General Foy's children reached a million francs. Lyons has drawn her own conclusions; she knows France, she knows that there is no religion left. The story of Richard Lenoir is one of those blunders which Fouché condemned as worse than a crime.

"Suppose that there is a tinge of charlatanism in the way in which concerns are put before the public," began Couture, returning to the charge, "that word charlatanism has come to be a damaging expression, a middle term, as it were, between right and wrong; for where, I ask you, does charlatanism begin? where does it end? what is charlatanism? do me the kindness of telling

me what is it *not*. Now for a little plain speaking, the rarest social ingredient. A business which should consist in going out at night to look for goods to sell in the day would be obviously impossible. You find the instinct of forestalling the market in the very match-seller. How to forestall the market—that is the one idea of the so-called honest tradesman of the Rue Saint-Denis, as of the most brazen-fronted speculator. If stocks are heavy, sell you must. If sales are slow, you must tickle your customer; hence the signs of the Middle Ages, hence the modern prospectus. I do not see a hair's breadth of difference between attracting custom and forcing your goods upon the consumer. It may happen, it is sure to happen, it often happens, that a shopkeeper gets hold of damaged goods, for the seller always cheats the buyer. Go and ask the most upright folk in Paris—the best known men in business, that is—and they will all triumphantly tell you of dodges by which they passed off stock which they knew to be bad upon the public. The well-known firm of Minard began by sales of this kind. In the Rue Saint-Denis they sell nothing but 'greased silk'; it is all that they can do. The most honest merchants tell you in the most candid way that 'you must get out of a bad bargain as best you can'—a motto for the most unscrupulous rascality. Blondet has given you an account of the Lyons affair, its causes and effects, and I proceed in my turn to illustrate my theory with an anecdote:—There was once a woolen weaver, an ambitious man, burdened with a large family of children by a wife too much beloved. He put too much faith in the Republic, laid in a stock of scarlet wool, and manufactured those red knitted caps that you may have noticed on the heads of all the street urchins in Paris. How this came about I am just going to tell you. The Republic was beaten. After the Saint-Merri affair the caps were quite unsalable. Now, when a weaver finds that beside a wife and children he has some ten thousand red woolen caps in the house, and that no hatter will take a single one of them, notions begin to pass through his head as fast as if he were a banker racking his brains to get rid of ten million francs' worth of shares in some dubious investment. As for this Law of the Faubourg, this Nucingen of caps, do you know what he did? He went to find a pothouse dandy, one of those comic men that drive police sergeants to despair at open-air dancing saloons at the barriers; him he engaged to play the part of an American captain staying at Meurice's and buying for the export trade. He was to go to some large hatter, who still had a cap in his show window, and "inquire for" ten thousand red woolen caps. The hatter, scenting business in the wind, hurried round to the woolen weaver and rushed upon the stock. After that, no more of the American captain, you understand, and great plenty of caps. If you interfere with the freedom of trade, because free trade has its drawbacks, you might as well tie the hands of justice because a crime sometimes goes unpunished, or blame the bad organization of society because civilization produces some evils. From the caps and the Rue Saint-Denis to joint-stock companies and the Bank—draw your own conclusions."

"A crown for Couture!" said Blondet,

twisting a serviette into a wreath for his head. "I go further than that, gentlemen. If there is a defect in the working hypothesis, what is the cause? The law! the whole system of legislation. The blame rests with the legislature. The great men of their districts are sent up to us by the provinces, crammed with parochial notions of right and wrong; and ideas that are indispensable if you want to keep clear of collisions with justice, are stupid when they prevent a man from rising to the height at which a maker of laws ought to abide. Legislation may prohibit such and such developments of human passions—gambling, lotteries, the Ninons of the pavement, anything you please—but you cannot extirpate the passions themselves by any amount of legislation. Abolish them, you would abolish the society which develops them, even if it does not produce them. The gambling passion lurks, for instance, at the bottom of every heart, be it a girl's heart, a provincial's, a diplomatist's; everybody longs to have money without working for it; you may hedge the desire about with restrictions, but the gambling mania immediately breaks out in another form. You stupidly suppress lotteries, but the cookmaid pilfers none the less, and puts her ill gotten gains in the savings bank. She gambles with two hundred and fifty franc stakes instead of forty sous; joint-stock companies and speculation take the place of the lottery; the gambling goes on without the green cloth, the croupier's rake is invisible, the cheating planned beforehand. The gambling houses are closed, the lottery has come to an end; 'and now,' cry idiots, 'morals have greatly improved in France,' as if, forsooth, they had suppressed the punters. The gambling still goes on, only the State makes nothing from it now; and for a tax paid with pleasure, it has substituted a burdensome duty. Nor is the number of suicides reduced, for the gambler never dies, though his victim does."

"I am not speaking now of foreign capital lost to France," continued Couture, "nor of the Frankfort lotteries. The convention passed a decree of death against those who hawked foreign lottery-tickets, and procureur-syndics used to traffic in them. So much for the sense of our legislator and his driveling philanthropy. The encouragement given to savings banks is a piece of crass political folly. Suppose that things take a doubtful turn and people lose confidence, the Government will find that they have instituted a cue for money, like the cues outside the bakers' shops. So many savings banks, so many riots. Three street boys hoist a flag in some corner or other, and you have a revolution ready made.

"But this danger, however great it may be, seems to me less to be dreaded than the widespread demoralization. Savings banks are a means of inoculating the people, the classes least restrained by education or by reason from schemes that are tacitly criminal with the vices bred of self-interest. See what comes of philanthropy!

"A great politician ought to be without a conscience in abstract questions, or he is a bad steersman for a nation. An honest politician is a steam-engine with feelings, a pilot that would make love at the helm and let the ship go down. A prime minister who helps him-

self to millions but makes France prosperous and great is preferable, is he not, to a public servant who ruins his country, even though he is buried at the public expense. Would you hesitate between a Richelieu, a Mazarin, or a Potemkin, each with his hundreds of millions of francs, and a conscientious Robert Lindet that could make nothing out of *assignats* and national property, or one of the virtuous imbeciles who ruined Louis XVI.? Go on, Bixiou."

"I will not go into the details of the speculation which we owe to Nucingen's financial genius. It would be the more inexpedient because the concern is still in existence and shares are quoted on the Bourse. The scheme was so convincing, there was such life in an enterprise sanctioned by royal letters patent, that though the shares issued at a thousand francs fell to three hundred, they rose to seven, and will reach par yet, after weathering the stormy years '27, '30, and '32. The financial crisis of 1827 sent them down; after the Revolution of July they fell flat; but there really is something in the affair, Nucingen simply could not invent a bad speculation. In short, as several banks of the highest standing have been mixed up in the affair, it would be unparliamentary to go further into detail. The nominal capital amounted to ten millions; the real capital to seven. Three millions were allotted to the founders and bankers that brought it out. Everything was done with a view to sending up the shares two hundred francs during the first six months by the payment of a sham dividend. Twenty per cent. on ten millions! Only Du Tillet's interest in the concern amounted to five hundred thousand francs. In the stock exchange slang of the day, this share of the spoils was a 'sop in the pan.' Nucingen, with his millions made by the aid of a lithographer's stone and a handful of pink paper, proposed to himself to operate certain nice little shares carefully hoarded in his private office till the time came for putting them on the market. The shareholder's money floated the concern, and paid for splendid business premises, so they began operations. And Nucingen held in reserve founders' shares in Heaven knows what coal and argentiferous lead mines, also in a couple of canals; the shares had been given to him for bringing out the concerns. All four were in working order, well got up and popular, for they paid good dividends.

"Nucingen might, of course, count on getting the differences if the shares went up, but this formed no part of the Baron's schemes; he left the shares at sea-level on the market to tempt the fishes.

"So he had massed his securities as Napoleon massed his troops, all with a view to suspending payment in the thick of the approaching crisis of 1826-27 which revolutionized European markets. If Nucingen had had his Prince of Wagram he might have said, like Napoleon from the heights of Santon, 'Make a careful survey of the situation; on such and such a day, at such an hour funds will be poured in at such a spot.' But in whom could he confide? Du Tillet had no suspicion of his own complicity in Nucingen's plot; and the bold Baron had learned from his previous experiments in suspensions of payment that he must have some man

whom he could trust to act at need as a lever upon the creditor. Nucingen had never a nephew, he dared not take a confidant; yet he must have a devoted and intelligent Claparon, a born diplomatist with a good manner, a man worthy of him, and fit to take office under government. Such connections are not made in a day nor yet in a year. By this time Rastignac had been so thoroughly entangled by Nucingen, that being, like the Prince de la Paix, equally beloved by the King and Queen of Spain, he fancied that he (Rastignac) had secured a very valuable dupe in *Nucingen*. For a long while he had laughed at a man whose capacities he was unable to estimate; he ended in a sober, serious, and devout admiration of Nucingen, owning that Nucingen really had the power which he thought that he alone possessed.

"From Rastignac's introduction to society in Paris, he had been led to contemn it utterly. From the year 1820 he thought, like the Baron, that honesty was a question of appearances; he looked upon the world as a mixture of corruption and rascality of every sort. If he admitted exceptions, he condemned the mass; he put no belief in any virtue—men did right or wrong, as circumstances decided. His worldly wisdom was the work of a moment; he learned his lesson at the summit of Père-Lachaise one day when he buried a poor, good man there; it was his Delphine's father, who died deserted by his daughters and their husbands, a dupe of our society and of the truest affection. Rastignac then and there resolved to exploit this world, to wear full dress of virtue, honesty, and fine manners. He was empanoplied in selfishness. When the young scion of nobility discovered that Nucingen wore the same armor, he respected him much as some knight mounted upon a barb and arrayed in damascened steel would have respected an adversary equally well horsed and equipped at a tournament in the Middle Ages. But for the time he had grown effeminate amid the delights of Capua. The friendship of such a woman as the Baronne de Nucingen is of a kind that sets a man abjuring egoism in all its forms.

"Delphine had been deceived once already; in her first venture of the affections she came across a piece of Birmingham manufacture, in the shape of the late lamented de Marsay; and therefore she could not but feel a limitless affection for a young provincial with all the provincial's articles of faith. Her tenderness reacted upon Rastignac. So by the time that Nucingen had put his wife's friend into the harness in which the exploiter always gets the exploited, he had reached the precise juncture when he (the Baron) meditated a third suspension of payment. To Rastignac he confided his position; he pointed out to Rastignac a means of making 'reparation.' As a consequence of his intimacy, he was expected to play the part of confederate. The Baron judged it unsafe to communicate the whole of his plot to his conjugal collaborator. Rastignac quite believed in impending disaster; and the Baron allowed him to believe further that he (Rastignac) saved the shop.

"But when there are so many threads in a skein, there are apt to be knots. Rastignac trembled for Delphine's

money. He stipulated that Delphine must be independent and her estate separated from her husband's, swearing to himself that he would repay her by trebling her fortune. As, however, Rastignac said nothing of himself, Nucingen begged him to take, in the event of success, twenty-five shares of a thousand francs in the argentiferous lead mines, and Eugène took them—not to offend him! Nucingen had put Rastignac up to this the day before that evening in the Rue Joubert when our friend counseled Malvina to marry. A cold shiver ran through Rastignac at the sight of so many happy folk in Paris going to and fro unconscious of the impending loss; even so a young commander might shiver at the first sight of an army drawn up before a battle. He saw the d'Aiglemonts, the d'Aldriggers, and Beaudenord. Poor little Isaure and Godefroid playing at love, what were they but Acis and Galatea under the rock which a hulking Polyphemus was about to send down upon them."

"That monkey of a Bixiou has something almost like talent," said Blondet.

"Oh! so I am not maundering now?" asked Bixiou, enjoying his success as he looked round at his surprised auditors. —"For two months past," he continued, "Godefroid had given himself up to all the little pleasures of preparation for the marriage. At such times men are like birds building nests in spring; they come and go, pick up their bits of straw, and fly off with them in their beaks to line the nest that is to hold a brood of young birds by and by. Isaure's bridegroom had taken a house in the Rue de la Plancher at a thousand crowns, a comfortable little house neither too large nor too small, which suited them. Every morning he went round to take a look at the workmen and to superintend the painters. He had introduced 'comfort' (the only good thing in England)—heating apparatus to maintain an even temperature all over the house; fresh, soft colors, carefully chosen furniture, neither too showy nor too much in the fashion; spring blinds fitted to every window inside and out; silver plate and new carriages. He had seen to the stables, coach house, and harness room, where Toby Joby Paddy floundered and fidgeted about like a marmot let loose, apparently rejoiced to know that there would be women about the place and a 'lady'! This fervent passion of a man that sets up housekeeping, choosing clocks, going to visit his betrothed with his pockets full of patterns of stuffs, consulting her as to the bedroom furniture, going, coming, and trotting about, for love's sake,—all this, I say, is a spectacle in the highest degree calculated to rejoice the hearts of honest people, especially tradespeople. And as nothing pleases folk better than the marriage of a good-looking young fellow of seven-and-twenty and a charming girl of nineteen that dances admirably well, Godefroid in his perplexity over the *corbeille* asked Mme. de Nucingen and Rastignac to breakfast with him and advise him on this all-important point. He hit likewise on the happy idea of asking his cousin d'Aiglemont and his wife to meet them, as well as Mme. de Sérizy. Women of the world are ready enough to join for once in an improvised breakfast-party at a bachelor's rooms."

"It is their way of playing truant," put in Blondet.

"Of course they went over the new house," resumed Bixiou. "Married women relish these little expeditions as ogres relish warm flesh; they feel young again with the young bliss, unspoiled as yet by fruition. Breakfast was served in Godefroid's sitting-room, decked out like a troop horse for a farewell to bachelor life. There were dainty little dishes such as women love to devour, nibble at, and sip of a morning, when they are usually alarmingly hungry and horribly afraid to confess it. It would seem that a woman compromises herself by admitting that she is hungry. —'Why have you come alone?' inquired Godefroid when Rastignac appeared.— 'Mme de Nucingen is out of spirits; I will tell you all about it,' answered Rastignac, with the air of a man whose temper has been tried—'A quarrel?' hazarded Godefroid. — 'No.' — At four o'clock the women took flight for the Bois de Boulogne; Rastignac stayed in the room and looked out of the window, fixing his melancholy gaze upon Toby Joby Paddy, who stood, his arms crossed in Napoleonic fashion, audaciously posted in front of Beaudenord's cab horse. The child could only control the animal with his shrill little voice, but the horse was afraid of Joby Toby.

"'Well,' began Godefroid, 'what is the matter with you, my dear fellow? You look gloomy and anxious; your gayety is forced. You are tormented by incomplete happiness. It is wretched, and that is a fact, when one cannot marry the woman one loves at the mayor's office and the church.'

"'Have you courage to hear what I have to say? I wonder whether you will see how much a man must be attached to a friend if he can be guilty of such a breach of confidence as this for his sake.'

"Something in Rastignac's voice stung like a lash of a whip.

"'*What?*' asked Godefroid de Beaudenord, turning pale.

"'I was unhappy over your joy; I had not the heart to keep such a secret to myself when I saw all these preparations, your happiness in bloom.'

"'Just say it out in three words!'

"'Swear to me on your honor that you will be as silent as the grave——'

"'As the grave,' repeated Beaudenord.

"'That if one of your nearest relatives were concerned in this secret, he should not know it.'

"'No.'

"'Very well. Nucingen started tonight for Brussels. He must file his schedule if he cannot arrange a settlement. This very morning Delphine petitioned for the separation of her estate. You may still save your fortune.'

"'How?' faltered Godefroid; the blood turned to ice in his veins.

"'Simply write to the Baron de Nucingen, antedating your letter a fortnight, and instruct him to invest all your capital in shares.'—Rastignac suggested Claparon and Company, and continued —'You have a fortnight, a month, possibly three months, in which to realize and make something; the shares are still going up——'

"'But d'Aiglemont, who was here at breakfast with us, has a million in Nucingen's bank.'

"'Look here; I do not know whether

there will be enough of these shares to cover it; and besides, I am not his friend, I cannot betray Nucingen's confidence. You must not speak to d'Aiglemont. If you say a word, you must answer to me for the consequences.'

"Godefroid stood stockstill for ten minutes.

"'Do you accept? Yes or no!' said the inexorable Rastignac.

"Godefroid took up the pen, wrote at Rastignac's dictation, and signed his name.

"'My poor cousin!' he cried.

"'Each for himself,' said Rastignac. 'And there is one more settled!' he added to himself as he left Beaudenord.

"While Rastignac was maneuvering thus in Paris, imagine the state of things on the Bourse. A friend of mine, a provincial, a stupid creature, once asked me as we came past the Bourse between four and five in the afternoon what all that crowd of chatterers was doing, what they could possibly find to say to each other, and why they were wandering to and fro when business in public securities was over for the day. 'My friend,' said I, 'they have made their meal, and now they are digesting it; while they digest it, they gossip about their neighbors, or there would be no commercial security in Paris. Concerns are floated here, such and such a man—Palma, for instance, who is something the same here as Sinard at the Académie Royale des Sciences—Palma says, "Let the speculation be made" and the speculation is made.'"

"What a man that Hebrew is," put in Blondet; "he has not had a university education, but a universal education. And universal does not in his case mean superficial; whatever he knows, he knows to the bottom. He has a genius, an intuitive faculty for business. He is the oracle of all the lynxes that rule the Paris market; they will not touch an investment until Palma has looked into it. He looks solemn, he listens, ponders, and reflects; his interlocutor thinks that after this consideration he has come round his man, till Palma says, 'This will not do for me.'—The most extraordinary thing about Palma, to my mind, is the fact that he and Werbrust were partners for ten years, and there was never the shadow of a disagreement between them."

"That is the way with the very strong or the very weak; any two between the extremes fall out and lose no time in making enemies of each other," said Couture.

"Nucingen, you see, had neatly and skillfully put a little bombshell under the colonnades of the Bourse, and towards four o'clock in the afternoon it exploded.—'Here is something serious; have you heard the news?' asked du Tillet, drawing Werbrust into a corner. 'Here is Nucingen gone off to Brussels, and his wife petitioning for the separation of her estate.'

"'Are you and he in it together for a liquidation?' asked Werbrust, smiling.

"'No foolery, Werbrust,' said du Tillet. 'You know the holders of his paper. Now, look here. There is business in it. Shares in this new concern of ours have gone up twenty per cent. already; they will go up to five-and-twenty by the end of the quarter; you know why. They are going to pay a splendid dividend.'

"'Sly dog,' said Werbrust. 'Get along

with you; you are a devil with long and sharp claws, and you have them deep in the butter.'

"'Just let me speak, or we shall not have time to operate. I hit on the idea as soon as I heard the news. I positively saw Mme. de Nucingen crying; she is afraid for her fortune.'

"'Poor little thing!' said the old Alsatian Jew, with an ironical expression. 'Well?' he added, as du Tillet was silent.

"'Well. At my place I have a thousand shares of a thousand francs in our concern; Nucingen handed them over to me to put on the market, do you understand? Good. Now let us buy up a million of Nucingen's paper at a discount of ten or twenty per cent., and we shall make a handsome percentage out of it. We shall be debtors and creditors both; confusion will be worked! But we must set about it carefully, or the holders may imagine that we are operating in Nucingen's interests.'"

"Then Werbrust understood. He squeezed du Tillet's hand with an expression such as a woman's face wears when she is displaying her neighbor a trick.

"Martin Falleix came up.—'Well, have you heard the news?' he asked. 'Nucingen has stopped payment.'

"'Pooh,' said Werbrust, 'pray don't noise it about; give those that hold his paper a chance.'

"'What is the cause of the smash; do you know?' put in Claparon.

"'You know nothing about it,' said du Tillet. 'There isn't any smash. Payment will be made in full. Nucingen will start again; I shall find him all the money he wants. I know the causes of the suspension. He put all his capital into Mexican securities, and they are sending him metal in return; old Spanish cannon cast in such an insane fashion that they melted down gold and bell-metal and church plate for it, and all the wreck of the Spanish dominion in the Indies. The specie is slow in coming, and the dear Baron is hard up. That is all.'

"'It is a fact,' said Werbrust; 'I am taking his paper myself at twenty per cent. discount.'

"The news spread swift as fire in a straw rick. The most contradictory reports got about. But such confidence was felt in the firm after the two previous suspensions, that everyone stuck to Nucingen's paper. 'Palma must lend us a hand,' said Werbrust.

"Now Palma was the Kellers' oracle, and the Kellers were brimful of Nucingen's paper. A hint from Palma would be enough. Werbrust arranged with Palma, and he rang the alarm bell. There was a panic next day on the Bourse. The Kellers, acting on Palma's advice, let go Nucingen's paper at ten per cent. of loss; they set the example on 'Change, for they were supposed to know very well what they were about. Taillefer followed up with three hundred thousand francs at a discount of twenty per cent., and Martin Falleix with two hundred thousand at fifteen. Gigonnet saw what was going on. He helped to spread the panic, with a view to buying up Nucingen's paper himself and making a commission of two or three per cent. out of Werbrust.

"In a corner of the Bourse he came upon poor Matifat, who had three hun-

dred thousand francs in Nucingen's bank. Matifat, ghastly and haggard, beheld the terrible Gigonnet, the bill-discounter of his old quarter, coming up to worry him. He shuddered in spite of himself.

"'Things are looking bad. There is a crisis on hand. Nucingen is compounding with his creditors. But this does not interest you, Daddy Matifat; you are out of business.'

"'Oh, well, you are mistaken, Gigonnet; I am in for three hundred thousand francs. I meant to speculate in Spanish bonds.'

"'Then you have saved your money. Spanish bonds would have swept everything away; whereas I am prepared to offer you something like fifty per cent. for your account with Nucingen.'

"'I would rather wait for the composition,' said Matifat; 'I never knew a banker yet that paid less than fifty per cent. Ah, if it were only a matter of ten per cent. of loss——' added the retired man of drugs.

"'Well, will you take fifteen?' asked Gigonnet.

"'You are very keen about it, it seems to me,' said Matifat.

"'Good-night.'

"'Will you take twelve?'

"'Done,' said Gigonnet.

"Before night two millions had been bought up in the names of the three chance-united confederates, and posted by du Tillet to the debit side of Nucingen's account. Next day they drew their premium.

"The dainty little old Baroness d'Aldrigger was at breakfast with her two daughters and Godefroid, when Rastignac came in with a diplomatic air to steer the conversation on the financial crisis. The Baron de Nucingen felt a lively regard for the d'Aldrigger family; he was prepared, if things went amiss, to cover the Baroness's account with his best securities, to wit, some shares in the argentiferous lead mines, but the application must come from the lady.

"'Poor Nucingen!' said the Baroness. 'What can have become of him?'

"'He is in Belgium. His wife is petitioning for a separation of her property; but he has gone to see if he can arrange with some bankers to see him through.'

"'Dear me! That reminds me of my poor husband! Dear M. de Rastignac, how you must feel this, so attached as you are to the house!'

"'If all the indifferent are covered, his personal friends will be rewarded later on. He will pull through; he is a clever man.'

"'An honest man, above all things,' said the Baroness.

"A month later, Nucingen met all his liabilities, with no formalities beyond the letters by which creditors signified the investments which they preferred to take in exchange for their capital; and with no action on the part of other banks beyond registering the transfer of Nucingen's paper for the investments in favor.

"While du Tillet, Werbrust, Claparon, Gigonnet, and others that thought themselves clever were fetching in Nucingen's paper from abroad with a premium of one per cent.—for it was still worth their while to exchange it for securities in a rising market—there was all the more talk on the Bourse, because there was nothing now to fear. They babbled over Nucingen; he was discussed and

judged; they even slandered him. His luxurious life, his enterprises! When a man has so much on his hands, he overreaches himself, and so forth, and so forth.

"The talk was at its height, when several people were greatly astonished to receive letters from Geneva, Basel, Milan, Naples, Genoa, Marseilles, and London, in which their correspondents, previously advised of the failure, informed them that somebody was offering one per cent. for Nucingen's paper! 'There is something up,' said the lynxes of the Bourse.

"The Court meanwhile had granted the application for Mme. de Nucingen's separation as to her estate, and the question became still more complicated. The newspapers announced the return of M. le Baron de Nucingen from a journey to Belgium; he had been arranging, it was said, with a well-known Belgian firm to resume the working of some coal-pits in the Bois de Bossut. The Baron himself appeared on the course, and never even took the trouble to contradict the slanders circulating against him. He scorned to reply through the press; he simply bought a splendid estate just outside Paris for two millions of francs. Six weeks afterwards, the Bordeaux shipping intelligence announced that two vessels with cargoes of bullion to the amount of seven millions, consigned to the firm of Nucingen, were lying in the river.

"Then it was plain to Palma, Werbrust, and du Tillet that the trick had been played. Nobody else was any the wiser. The three scholars studied the means by which the great bubble had been created, saw that it had been preparing for eleven months, and pronounced Nucingen the greatest financier in Europe.

"Rastignac understood nothing of all this, but he had the four hundred thousand francs which Nucingen had allowed him to shear from the Parisian sheep, and he portioned his sisters. D'Aiglemont, at a hint from his cousin Beaudenord, besought Rastignac to accept ten per cent. upon his million if he would undertake to convert it into shares in a canal which is still to make, for Nucingen worked things with the Government to such purpose that the concessionaires find it to their interest not to finish their scheme. Charles Grandet implored Delphine's lover to use his interest to secure shares for him in exchange for his cash. And altogether Rastignac played the part of Law for ten days; he had the prettiest duchesses in France praying him to allot shares to them, and to-day the young man very likely has an income of forty thousand livres, derived in the first instance from the argentiferous lead mines."

"If everyone was better off, who can have lost?" asked Finot.

"Hear the conclusion," rejoined Bixiou. "The Marquis d'Aiglemont and Beaudenord (I put them forward as two examples out of many) kept their allotted shares, enticed by the so-called dividend that fell due a few months afterwards. They had another three per cent. on their capital, they sang Nucingen's praises, and took his part at a time when everybody suspected that he was going bankrupt. Godefroid married his beloved Isaure and took shares in the mines to the value of a hundred thousand francs. The Nucin-

gens gave a ball even more splendid than people expected of them on the occasion of the wedding; Delphine's present to the bride was a charming set of rubies. Isaure danced, a happy wife, a girl no longer. The little Baroness was more than ever a Shepherdess of the Alps. The ball was at its height when Malvina, the Andalouse of Musset's poem, heard du Tillet's voice dryly advising her to take Desroches. Desroches, warmed to the right degree by Rastignac and Nucingen, tried to come to an understanding financially; but at the first hint of shares in the mines for the bride's portion, he broke off and went back to the Matifats in the Rue du Cherche-Midi, only to find the accursed canal shares which Gigonnet had foisted on Matifat in lieu of cash.

"They had not long to wait for the crash. The firm of Claparon did business on too large a scale, the capital was locked up, the concern ceased to serve its purposes, or to pay dividends, though the speculations were sound. These misfortunes coincided with events of 1827. In 1829 it was too well known that Claparon was a man of straw set up by the two giants; he fell from his pedestal. Shares that had fetched twelve hundred and fifty francs fell to four hundred, though intrinsically they were worth six. Nucingen, knowing their value, bought them up at four.

"Meanwhile the little Baroness d'Aldrigger had sold out of the mines that paid no dividends, and Godefroid had reinvested the money belonging to his wife and her mother in Claparon's concern. Debts compelled them to realize when the shares were at their lowest, so that of seven hundred thousand francs only two hundred thousand remained. They made a clearance, and all that was left was prudently invested in the three per cents. at seventy-five. Godefroid, the sometime gay and careless bachelor who had lived without taking thought all his life long, found himself saddled with a little goose of a wife totally unfitted to bear adversity (indeed, before six months were over, he had witnessed the anserine transformation of his beloved), to say nothing of a mother-in-law whose mind ran on pretty dresses while she had not bread to eat. The two families must live together to live at all. It was only by stirring up all his considerably chilled interest that Godefroid got a post in the audit department. His friends?—They were out of town. His relatives?—All astonishment and promises. 'What! my dear boy! Oh! count upon me! Poor fellow!' and Beaudenord was clean forgotten fifteen minutes afterwards. He owed his place to Nucingen and de Vandenesse.

"And to-day these so estimable and unfortunate people are living on a third floor (not counting the entresol) in the Rue du Mont Thabor. Malvina, the Adolphus's pearl of a granddaughter, has not a farthing. She gives music lessons, not to be a burden upon her brother-in-law. You may see a tall, dark, thin, withered woman, like a mummy escaped from Passalacqua's, about afoot through the streets of Paris. In 1830 Beaudenord lost his situation just as his wife presented him with a fourth child. A family of eight and two servants (Wirth and his wife) and an income of eight thousand livres And at this moment the mines are pay-

ing so well, that an original share of a thousand francs brings in a dividend of cent. per cent.

"Rastignac and Mme. de Nucingen bought the shares sold by the Baroness and Godefroid. The Revolution made a peer of France of Nucingen and a Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor. He has not stopped payment since 1830, but still I hear that he has something like seventeen millions. He put faith in the Ordinances of July, sold out of all his investments, and boldly put his money into the Funds when the three per cents. stood at forty-five. He persuaded the Tuileries that this was done out of devotion, and about the same time he and du Tillet between them swallowed down three milloins belonging to that great scamp Philippe Bridau.

"Quite lately our Baron was walking along the Rue de Rivoli on his way to the Bois when he met the Baroness d'Aldrigger under the colonnade. The little old lady wore a tiny green bonnet with a rose-colored lining, a flowered gown, and a mantilla; altogether, she was more than ever the Shepherdess of the Alps. She could no more be made to understand the causes of her poverty than the sources of her wealth. As she went along, leaning upon poor Malvina, that model of heroic devotion, she seemed to be the young girl and Malvina the old mother. Wirth followed them, carrying an umbrella.

"'Dere are beoples whose vordune I vound it imbossible to make,' said the Baron, addressing his companion (M. Cointet, a cabinet minister). 'Now dot de baroxysm off brincibles haf bassed off, chust reinshtate dot boor Peautenord.'

"So Beaudenord went back to his desk, thanks to Nucingen's good offices; and the d'Aldriggers extol Nucingen as a hero of friendship, for he always sends the little Shepherdess of the Alps and her daughters invitations to his balls. No creature whatsoever can be made to understand that the Baron yonder three times did his best to plunder the public without breaking the letter of the law, and enriched people in spite of himself. No one has a word to say against him. If anybody should suggest that a big capitalist often is another word for a cut-throat, it would be a most egregious calumny. If stocks rise and fall, if property improves and depreciates, the fluctuations of the market are caused by a common movement, a something in the air, a tide in the affairs of men subject like other tides to lunar influences. The great Arago is much to blame for giving us no scientific theory to account for this important phenomenon. The only outcome of all this is an axiom which I have never seen anywhere in print——"

"And that is?"

"The debtor is more than a match for the creditor."

"Oh!" said Blondet. "For my own part, all that we have been saying seems to me to be a paraphrase of the epigram in which Montesquieu summed up *l'Esprit des Lois.*"

"What?" said Finot.

"Laws are like spiders' webs; the big flies get through, while the little ones are caught."

"Then, what are you for?" asked Finot

"For absolute government, the only kind of government under which enterprises against the spirit of the law can be put down. Yes. Arbitrary rule is

the salvation of a country when it comes to the support of justice, for the right of mercy is strictly one-sided. The king can pardon a fraudulent bankrupt; he cannot do anything for the victims. The letter of the law is fatal to modern society."

"Just get that into the electors' heads!" said Bixiou.

"Someone has undertaken to do it."

"Who?"

"Time. As the Bishop of Leon said, 'Liberty is ancient, but kingship is eternal'; any nation in its right mind returns to monarchical government in one form or another."

"I say, there was somebody next door," said Finot, hearing us rise to go.

"There always is somebody next door," retorted Bixiou. But he must have been drunk.

The Commission in Lunacy

Dedicated to Monsieur le Contre-Amiral Bazoche, Governor of the Isle of Bourbon, by the grateful writer,

De Balzac.

In 1828, at about one o'clock one morning, two persons came out of a large house in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, near the Élysée-Bourbon. One was a famous doctor, Horace Bianchon; the other was one of the most elegant men in Paris, the Baron de Rastignac; they were friends of long standing. Each had sent away his carriage, and no cab was to be seen in the street; but the night was fine, and the pavement dry.

"We will walk as far as the Boulevard," said Eugène de Rastignac to Bianchon. "You can get a hackney cab at the club; there is always one to be found there till daybreak. Come with me as far as my house."

"With pleasure."

"Well, and what have you to say about it?"

"About that woman?" said the doctor coldly.

"There I recognize my Bianchon!" exclaimed Rastignac.

"Why, how?"

"Well, my dear fellow, you speak of the Marquise d'Espard as if she were a case for your hospital."

"Do you want to know what I think, Eugène? If you throw over Madame de Nucingen for this Marquise, you will swap a one-eyed horse for a blind one."

"Madame de Nucingen is six-and-thirty, Bianchon."

"And this woman is three-and-thirty," said the doctor quickly.

"Her worst enemies only say six-and-twenty."

"My dear boy, when you really want to know a woman's age, look at her temples and the tip of her nose. Whatever women may achieve with their cosmetics, they can do nothing against those incorruptible witnesses to their experiences. There each year of life has

left its stigmata. When a women's temples are flaccid, seamed, withered in a particular way; when at the tip of her nose you see those minute specks, which look like the imperceptible black smuts which are shed in London by the chimneys in which coal is burnt. . . . Your servant, sir! That woman is more than thirty. She may be handsome, witty, loving—whatever you please, but she is past thirty, she is arriving at maturity. I do not blame men who attach themselves to that kind of woman; only, a man of your superior distinction must not mistake a winter pippin for a little summer apple, smiling on the bough, and waiting for you to crunch it. Love never goes to study the registers of birth and marriage; no one loves a woman because she is handsome or ugly, stupid or clever; we love because we love."

"Well, for my part, I love for quite other reasons. She is Marquise d'Espard; she was a Blamont-Chauvry; she is the fashion; she has soul; her foot is as pretty as the Duchess de Berri's; she has perhaps a hundred thousand francs a year—some day, perhaps, I may marry her! In short, she will put me into a position which will enable me to pay my debts."

"I thought you were rich," interrupted Bianchon.

"Bah! I have twenty thousand francs a year—just enough to keep up my stables. I was thoroughly done, my dear fellow, in that Nucingen business; I will tell you about that.—I have got my sisters married; that is the clearest profit I can show since we last met; and I would rather have them provided for than have five hundred thousand francs a year. Now, what would you have me do? I am ambitious. To what can Madame de Nucingen lead? A year more and I shall be shelved, stuck in a pigeon-hole like a married man. I have all the discomforts of marriage and of single life, without the advantages of either; a false position, to which every man must come who remains tied too long to the same apron-string."

"So you think you will come upon a treasure here?" said Bianchon. "Your Marquise, my dear fellow, does not hit my fancy at all."

"Your liberal opinions blur your eyesight. If Madame d'Espard were a Madame Rabourdin . . ."

"Listen to me. Noble or simple, she would still have no soul; she would be still a perfect type of selfishness. Take my word for it, medical men are accustomed to judge of people and things; the sharpest of us read the soul while we study the body. In spite of that pretty boudoir where we have spent this evening, in spite of the magnificence of the house, it is quite possible that Madame la Marquise is in debt."

"What makes you think so?"

"I do not assert it; I am supposing. She talked of her soul as Louis XVIII. used to talk of his heart. I tell you this: That fragile, fair woman, with her chestnut hair, who pities herself that she may be pitied, enjoys an iron constitution, and appetite like a wolf's and the strength and cowardice of a tiger. Gauze, and silk, and muslin were never more cleverly twisted round a lie. *Ecco.*"

"Bianchon, you frighten me! You have learned a good many things, then, since we lived in the Maison Vauquer?"

"Yes; since then, my boy, I have seen puppets, both dolls and mannikins. I know something of the ways of the fine ladies whose bodies we attend to, saving that which is dearest to them, their child—if they love it—or their pretty faces, which they always worship. A man spends his nights by their pillow, wearing himself to death to spare them the slightest loss of beauty in any part; he succeeds, he keeps their secret like the dead; they send to ask for his bill, and think it horribly exorbitant. Who saved them? Nature. Far from recommending him, they speak ill of him, fearing lest he should become the physician of their best friends.

"My dear fellow, those women of whom you say, 'They are angels!' I—I—have seen stripped of the little grimaces under which they hide their soul, as well as of the frippery under which they disguise their defects—without manners and without stays; they are not beautiful.

"We saw a great deal of mud, a great deal of dirt, under the waters of the world when we were aground for a time on the shoals of the Maison Vauquer.—What we saw there was nothing. Since I have gone into higher society, I have seen monsters dressed in satin, Michonneaus in white gloves, Poirets bedizened with orders, fine gentlemen doing more usurious business than old Gobseck! To the shame of mankind, when I have wanted to shake hands with Virtue, I have found her shivering in a loft, persecuted by calumny, half starving on an income or a salary of fifteen hundred francs a year, and regarded as crazy, or eccentric, or imbecile.

"In short, my dear boy, the Marquise is a woman of fashion, and I have a particular horror of that kind of woman. Do you want to know why? A woman who has a lofty soul, fine taste, gentle wit, a generously warm heart, and who lives a simple life, has not a chance of being the fashion. *Ergo:* A woman of fashion and a man in power are analogous; but there is this difference: the qualities by which a man raises himself above others ennoble him and are a glory to him; whereas the qualities by which a woman gains power for a day are hideous vices; she belies her nature to hide her character, and to live the militant life of the world she must have iron strength under a frail appearance.

"I, as a physician, know that a sound stomach excludes a good heart. Your woman of fashion feels nothing; here rage for pleasure has its source in a longing to heat up her cold nature, a craving for excitement and enjoyment, like an old man who stands night after night by the footlights at the opera. As she has more brain than heart, she sacrifices genuine passion and true friends to her triumph, as a general sends his most devoted subalterns to the front in order to win a battle. The woman of fashion ceases to be a woman; she is neither mother, nor wife, nor lover. She is, medically speaking, sex in the brain. And your Marquise, too, has all the characteristics of her monstrosity, the beak of a bird of prey, the clear, cold eye, the gentle voice—she is as polished as the steel of a machine, she touches everything except the heart."

"There is some truth in what you say, Bianchon."

"Some truth?" replied Bianchon. "It *is* all true. Do you suppose that I was

not struck to the heart by the insulting politeness by which she made me measure the imaginary distance which her noble birth sets between us? That I did not feel the deepest pity for her catlike civilities when I remembered what her object was? A year hence she will not write one word to do me the slightest service, and this evening she pelted me with smiles, believing that I can influence my uncle Popinot, on whom the success of her case——"

"Would you rather she should have played the fool with you, my dear fellow?—I accept your diatribe against women of fashion; but you are beside the mark. I should always prefer for a wife a Marquise d'Espard to the most devout and devoted creature on earth. Marry an angel! you would have to go and bury your happiness in the depths of the country! The wife of a politician is a governing machine, a contrivance that makes compliments and courtesies. She is the most important and most faithful tool which an ambitious man can use; a friend, in short, who may compromise herself without mischief, and whom he may belie without harmful results. Fancy Mahomet in Paris in the nineteenth century! His wife would be a Rohan, a Duchesse de Chevreuse of the Fronde, as keen and as flattering as an Ambassadress, as wily is Figaro. Your loving wives lead nowhere; a woman of the world leads to everything; she is the diamond with which a man cuts every window when he has not the golden key which unlocks every door. Leave humdrum virtues to the humdrum, ambitious vices to the ambitious.

"Besides, my dear fellow, do you imagine that the love of a Duchesse de Langeais, or de Maufrigneuse, or of a Lady Dudley does not bestow immense pleasure? If only you knew how much value the cold, severe style of such women gives to the smallest evidence of their affection! What a delight it is to see a periwinkle piercing through the snow! A smile from below a fan contradicts the reserve of an assumed attitude, and is worth all the unbridled tenderness of your middle-class women with their mortgaged devotion; for, in love, devotion is nearly akin to speculation.

"And, then, a woman of fashion, a Blamont-Chauvry, has her virtues too! Her virtues are fortune, power, effect, a certain contempt of all that is beneath her——"

"Thank you!" said Bianchon.

"Old curmudgeon!" said Rastignac, laughing. "Come—do not be common; do like your friend Desplein; be a Baron, a Knight of Saint-Michael; become a peer of France, and marry your daughters to dukes."

"I! May the five hundred thousand devils——"

"Come, come! Can you be superior only in medicine? Really, you distress me . . ."

"I hate that sort of people; I long for a revolution to deliver us from them forever."

"And so, my dear Robespierre of the lancet, you will not go to-morrow to your uncle Popinot?"

"Yes, I will," said Bianchon; "for you I would go to hell to fetch water . . ."

"My good friend, you really touch me. I have sworn that a commission shall sit on the Marquis. Why, here

is even a long-saved tear to thank you."

"But," Bianchon went on, "I do not promise to succeed as you wish with Jean-Jules Popinot. You do not know him. However, I will take him to see your Marquise the day after to-morrow; she may get round him if she can. I doubt it. If all the truffles, all the Duchesses, all the mistresses, and all the charmers in Paris were there in the full bloom of their beauty; if the King promised him the *pairie*, and the Almighty gave him the Order of Paradise with the revenues of Purgatory, not one of all these powers would induce him to transfer a single straw from one saucer of his scales into the other. He is a judge, as Death is Death."

The two friends had reached the office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the corner of the Boulevard des Capucines.

"Here you are at home," said Bianchon, laughing, as he pointed to the ministerial residence. "And here is my carriage," he added, calling a hackney cab. "And these—express our fortune."

"You will be happy at the bottom of the sea, while I am still struggling with the tempests on the surface, till I sink and go to ask you for a corner in your grotto, old fellow!"

"Till Saturday," replied Bianchon.

"Agreed," said Rastignac. "And you promise me Popinot?"

"I will do all my conscience will allow. Perhaps this appeal for a commission covers some little dramorama, to use a word of our good bad times."

"Poor Bianchon! he will never be anything but a good fellow," said Rastignac to himself as the cab drove off.

"Rastignac has given me the most difficult negotiation in the world," said Bianchon to himself, remembering, as he rose next morning, the delicate commission intrusted to him. "However, I have never asked the smallest service from my uncle in Court, and have paid more than a thousand visits gratis for him. And, after all, we are not apt to mince matters between ourselves. He will say Yes or No, and there an end."

After this little soliloquy the famous physician bent his steps, at seven in the morning, towards the Rue du Fouarre, where dwelt Monsieur Jean-Jules Popinot, judge of the Lower Court of the Department of the Seine. The Rue du Fouarre—an old word meaning straw—was in the thirteenth century the most important street in Paris. There stood the Schools of the University, where the voices of Abélard and of Gerson were heard in the world of learning. It is now one of the dirtiest streets of the Twelfth Arrondissement, the poorest quarter of Paris, that in which two-thirds of the population lack firing in winter, which leaves most brats at the gate of the Foundling Hospital, which sends most beggars to the poorhouse, most rag-pickers to the street corners, most decrepit old folks to bask against the walls on which the sun shines, most delinquents to the police courts.

Half-way down this street, which is always damp, and where the gutter carries to the Seine the blackened waters from some dye-works, there is an old house, restored no doubt under Francis I., and built of bricks held together by a few courses of masonry. That it is substantial seems proved by the shape of its front wall, not uncommonly seen

in some parts of Paris. It bellies, so to speak, in a manner caused by the protuberance of its first floor, crushed under the weight of the second and third, but upheld by the strong wall of the ground floor. At first sight it would seem as though the piers between the windows, though strengthened by the stone mullions, must give way; but the observer presently perceives that, as in the tower at Bologna, the old bricks and old time-eaten stones of this house persistently preserve their center of gravity.

At every season of the year the solid piers of the ground floor have the yellow tone and the imperceptible sweating surface that moisture gives to stone. The passer-by feels chilled as he walks close to this wall, where worn corner-stones ineffectually shelter him from the wheels of vehicles. As is always the case in houses built before carriages were in use, the vault of the doorway forms a very low archway not unlike the barbican of a prison. To the right of this entrance there are three windows, protected outside by iron gratings of so close a pattern, that the curious cannot possibly see the use made of the dark, damp rooms within, and the panes too are dirty and dusty; to the left are two similar windows, one of which is sometimes open, exposing to view the porter, his wife, and his children; swarming, working, cooking, eating, and screaming, in a floored and wainscoted room where everything is dropping to pieces, and into which you descend two steps—a depth which seems to suggest the gradual elevation of the soil of Paris.

If on a rainy day some foot-passenger takes refuge under the long vault, with projecting lime-washed beams, which leads from the door to the staircase, he will hardly fail to pause and look at the picture presented by the interior of this house. To the left is a square garden-plot, allowing of not more than four long steps in each direction, a garden of black soil, with trellises bereft of vines, and where, in default of vegetation under the shade of two trees, papers collect, old rags, potsherds, bits of mortar fallen from the roof; a barren ground, where time has shed on the walls, and on the trunks and branches of the trees, a powdery deposit like cold soot. The two parts of the house, set at a right angle, derive light from this garden-court shut in by two adjoining houses built on wooden piers, decrepit and ready to fall, where on each floor some grotesque evidence is to be seen of the craft pursued by the lodger within. Here long poles are hung with immense skeins of dyed worsted put out to dry; there, on ropes, dance clean-washed shirts; higher up, on a shelf, volumes display their freshly marbled edges; women sing, husbands whistle, children shout; the carpenter saws his planks, a copper-turner makes the metal screech; all kinds of industries combine to produce a noise which the number of instruments renders distracting.

The general system of decoration in this passage, which is neither courtyard, garden, nor vaulted way, though a little of all, consists of wooden pillars resting on square stone blocks, and forming arches. Two archways open on to the little garden; two others, facing the front gateway, lead to a wooden staircase, with an iron balustrade that was once

a miracle of smith's work, so whimsical are the shapes given to the metal; the worn steps creak under every tread. The entrance to each flat has an architrave dark with dirt, grease, and dust, and outer doors, covered with Utrecht velvet set with brass nails, once gilt, in a diamond pattern. These relics of splendor show that in the time of Louis XIV. the house was the residence of some Councilor to the *Parlement*, some rich priests, or some treasurer of the ecclesiastical revenue. But these vestiges of former luxury bring a smile to the lips by the artless contrast of past and present.

M. Jean-Jules Popinot lived on the first floor of this house, where the gloom, natural to all first floors in Paris houses, was increased by the narrowness of the street. This old tenement was known to all the twelfth *arrondissement*, on which Providence had bestowed this lawyer, as it gives a beneficent plant to cure or alleviate every malady. Here is a sketch of the man whom the brilliant Marquise d'Espard hoped to fascinate.

M. Popinot, as is seemly for a magistrate, was always dressed in black—a style which contributed to make him ridiculous in the eyes of those who were in the habit of judging everything from a superficial examination. Men who are jealous of maintaining the dignity required by this color ought to devote themselves to constant and minute care of their person; but our dear M. Popinot was incapable of forcing himself to the puritanical cleanliness which black demands. His trousers, always threadbare, looked like camlet—the stuff of which attorneys' gowns are made; and his habitual stoop set them in time, in such innumerable creases, that in places they were traced with lines, whitish, rusty, or shiny, betraying either sordid avarice, or the most unheeding poverty. His coarse worsted stockings were twisted anyhow in his ill-shaped shoes. His linen had the tawny tinge acquired by long sojourn in a wardrobe, showing that the late lamented Madame Popinot had had a mania for much linen; in the Flemish fashion, perhaps, she had given herself the trouble of a great wash no more than twice a year. The old man's coat and waistcoat were in harmony with his trousers, shoes, stockings, and linen. He always had the luck of his carelessness; for, the first day he put on a new coat, he unfailingly matched it with the rest of his costume by staining it with incredible promptitude. The good man waited till his housekeeper told him that his hat was too shabby before buying a new one. His necktie was always crumpled and starchless, and he never set his dog's-eared shirt collar straight after his judge's bands had disordered it. He took no care of his gray hair, and shaved but twice a week. He never wore gloves, and generally kept his hands stuffed into his empty trousers' pockets; the soiled pocket-holes, almost always torn, added a final touch to the slovenliness of his person.

Anyone who knows the Palais de Justice at Paris, where every variety of black attire may be studied, can easily imagine the appearance of M. Popinot. The habit of sitting for days at a time modifies the structure of the body, just as the fatigue of hearing interminable pleadings tells on the expression of a magistrate's face. Shut up as he is in courts ridiculously small, devoid of archi-

tectural dignity, and where the air is quickly vitiated, a Paris judge inevitably acquires a countenance puckered and seamed by reflection, and depressed by weariness; his complexion turns pallid, acquiring an earthy or greenish hue according to his individual temperament. In short, within a given time the most blooming young man is turned into an "inasmuch" machine — an instrument which applies the Code to individual cases with the indifference of clockwork.

Hence, nature having bestowed on M. Popinot a not too pleasing exterior, his life as a lawyer had not improved it. His frame was graceless and angular. His thick knees, huge feet, and broad hands formed a contrast with a priest-like face having a vague resemblance to a calf's head, meek to unmeaningness, and but little brightened by divergent, bloodless eyes, divided by a straight flat nose, surmounted by a flat forehead, flanked by enormous ears, flabby and graceless. His thin, weak hair showed the baldness through various irregular partings.

One feature only commended this face to the physiognomist. This man had a mouth to whose lips divine kindness lent its sweetness. They were wholesome, full, red lips, finely wrinkled, sinuous, mobile, by which nature had given expression to noble feeling; lips which spoke to the heart and proclaimed the man's intelligence and lucidity, a gift of second sight, and a heavenly temper; and you would have judged him wrongly from looking merely at his sloping forehead, his fireless eyes, and his shambling gait. His life answered to his countenance; it was full of secret labor, and hid the virtue of a saint. His superior knowledge of law proved so strong a recommendation at the time when Napoleon was reorganizing it in 1808 and 1811, that, by the advice of Cambacérès, he was one of the first men named to sit on the Imperial High Court of Justice at Paris. Popinot was so schemer. Whenever any demand was made, any request preferred for an appointment, the Minister would overlook Popinot, who never set foot in the house of the High Chancellor or the Chief Justice. From the High Court he was sent down to the Common Court, and pushed to the lowest rung of the ladder by active struggling men. There he was appointed supernumerary judge. There was a general outcry among the lawyers: "Popinot a supernumerary!" Such injustice struck the legal world with dismay—the attorneys, the registrars, everybody but Popinot himself, who made no complaint. The first clamor over, everybody was satisfied that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, which must certainly be the legal world. Popinot remained supernumerary judge till the day when the most famous Great Seal under the Restoration avenged the oversights heaped on this modest and uncomplaining man by the Chief Justices of the Empire. After being a supernumerary for twelve years, M. Popinot would no doubt die a puisne judge of the Court of the Seine.

To account for the obscure fortunes of one of the superior men of the legal profession, it is necessary to enter here into some details which will serve to reveal his life and character, and which will, at the same time, display some

of the wheels of the great machine known as Justice. M. Popinot was classed by the three Presidents who successively controlled the Court of the Seine under the category of possible Judges, the stuff of which judges are made. Thus classified, he did not achieve the reputation for capacity which his previous labors had deserved. Just as a painter is invariably included in a category as a landscape painter, a portrait painter, a painter of history, of sea pieces, or of genre, by a public consisting of artists, connoisseurs, and simpletons, who, out of envy, or critical omnipotence, or prejudice, fence in his intellect, assuming, one and all, that there are ganglions in every brain—a narrow judgment which the world applies to writers, to statesmen, to everybody who begins with some specialty before being hailed as omniscient; so Popinot's fate was sealed, and he was hedged round to do a particular kind of work. Magistrates, attorneys, pleaders, all who pasture on the legal common, distinguish two elements in every case—law and equity. Equity is the outcome of facts, law is the application of principles to facts. A man may be right in equity but wrong in law, without any blame to the judge. Between his conscience and the facts there is a whole gulf of determining reasons unknown to the judge, but which condemn or legitimize the act. A judge is not God; his duty is to adapt facts to principles, to judge cases of infinite variety while measuring them by a fixed standard.

France employs about six thousand judges; no generation has six thousand great men at her command, much less can she find them in the legal profession. Popinot, in the midst of the civilization of Paris, was just a very clever cadi, who, by the character of his mind, and by dint of rubbing the letter of the law into the essence of facts, had learned to see the error of spontaneous and violent decisions. By the help of his judicial second sight he could pierce the double casing of lies in which advocates hide the heart of a trial. He was a judge, as the great Desplein was a surgeon; he probed men's consciences as the anatomist probed their bodies. His life and habits had led him to an exact appreciation of their most secret thoughts by a thorough study of facts.

He sifted a case as Cuvier sifted the earth's crust. Like that great thinker, he proceeded from deduction to deduction before drawing his conclusions, and reconstructed the past career of a conscience as Cuvier reconstructed an Anoplotherium. When considering a brief he would often wake in the night, startled by a gleam of truth suddenly sparkling in his brain. Struck by the deep injustice, which is the end of these contests, in which everything is against the honest man, everything to the advantage of the rogue, he often summed up in favor of equity against law in such cases as bore on questions of what may be termed divination. Hence he was regarded by his colleagues as a man not of a practical mind; his arguments on two lines of deduction made their deliberations lengthy. When Popinot observed their dislike to listening to him he gave his opinion briefly; it was said that he was not a good judge in this class of cases; but as his gift of discrimination was remarkable, his opinion

lucid, and his penetration profound, he was considered to have a special aptitude for the laborious duties of an examining judge. So an examining judge he remained during the greater part of his legal career.

Although his qualifications made him eminently fitted for its difficult functions, and he had the reputation of being so learned in criminal law that his duty was a pleasure to him, the kindness of his heart constantly kept him in torture, and he was nipped as in a vice between his conscience and his pity. The services of an examining judge are better paid than those of a judge in civil actions, but they do not therefore prove a temptation; they are too onerous. Popinot, a man of modest and virtuous learning, without ambition, an indefatigable worker, never complained of his fate; he sacrificed his tastes and his compassionate soul to the public good, and allowed himself to be transported to the noisome pools of criminal examinations, where he showed himself alike severe and beneficent. His clerk sometimes would give the accused some money to buy tobacco, or a warm winter garment, as he led him back from the judge's office to the *Souricière*, the mouse-trap—the House of Detention where the accused are kept under the orders of the Examining Judge. He knew how to be an inflexible judge and a charitable man. And no one extracted a confession so easily as he without having recourse to judicial trickery. He had, too, all the acumen of an observer. This man, apparently so foolishly good-natured, simple, and absent-minded, could guess all the cunning of a prison wag, unmask the astutest street hussy, and subdue a scoundrel. Unusual circumstances had sharpened his perspicacity; but to relate these we must intrude on his domestic history, for in him the judge was the social side of the man; another man, greater and less known, existed within.

Twelve years before the beginning of this story, in 1816, during the terrible scarcity which coincided disastrously with the stay in France of the so-called Allies, Popinot was appointed President of the Commission Extraordinary, formed to distribute food to the poor of his neighborhood, just when he had planned to move from the Rue du Fouarre, which he as little liked to live in as his wife did. The great lawyer, the clear-sighted criminal judge, whose superiority seemed to his colleagues a form of aberration, had for five years been watching legal results without seeing their causes. As he scrambled up into lofts, as he saw the poverty, as he studied the desperate necessities which gradually bring the poor to criminal acts, as he estimated their long struggles, compassion filled his soul. The judge then became the Saint Vincent de Paul of these grown-up children, these suffering toilers. The transformation was not immediately complete. Beneficence has its temptations as vice has. Charity consumes a saint's purse, as roulette consumes the possessions of a gambler, quite gradually. Popinot went from misery to misery, from charity to charity; then, by the time he had lifted all the rags which cover public pauperism, like a bandage under which an inflamed wound lies festering, at the end of a year he had become the Providence incarnate of that quarter of the

town. He was a member of the Benevolent Committee and of the Charity Organization. Wherever any gratuitous services were needed he was ready, and did everything without fuss, like the *man with the short cloak,* who spends his life in carrying soup round the markets and other places where there are starving folks.

Popinot was fortunate in acting on a larger circle and in a higher sphere; he had an eye on everything, he prevented crime, he gave work to the unemployed, he found a refuge for the helpless, he distributed aid with discernment wherever danger threatened, he made himself the counselor of the widow, the protector of homeless children, the sleeping partner of small traders. No one at the Courts, no one in Paris, knew of this secret life of Popinot's. There are virtues so splendid that they necessitate obscurity; men make haste to hide them under a bushel. As to those whom the lawyer succored, they, hard at work all day and tired at night, were little able to sing his praises; theirs was the gracelessness of children, who can never pay because they owe too much. There is such compulsory ingratitude; but what heart that has sown good to reap gratitude can think itself great?

By the end of the second year of his apostolic work, Popinot had turned the storeroom at the bottom of his house into a parlor, lighted by the three iron-barred windows. The walls and ceiling of this spacious room were whitewashed, and the furniture consisted of wooden benches like those seen in schools, a clumsy cupboard, a walnut-wood writing-table, and an armchair. In the cupboard were his registers of donations, his tickets for orders for bread, and his diary. He kept his ledger like a tradesman, that he might not be ruined by kindness. All the sorrows of the neighborhood were entered and numbered in a book, where each had its little account, as merchants' customers have theirs. When there was any question as to a man or a family needing help, the lawyer could always command information from the police.

Lavienne, a man made for his master, was his aid-de-camp. He redeemed or renewed pawn-tickets, and visited the districts most threatened with famine, while his master was in court.

From four till seven in the morning in summer, from six till nine in winter, this room was full of women, children, and paupers, while Popinot gave audience. There was no need for a stove in winter; the crowd was so dense that the air was warmed; only Lavienne strewed straw on the wet floor. By long use the benches were as polished as varnished mahogany; at the height of a man's shoulders the wall had a coat of dark, indescribable color, given to it by the rags and tattered clothes of these poor creatures. The poor wretches loved Popinot so well that when they assembled before his door was opened, before daybreak on a winter's morning, the women warming themselves with their foot-braziers, the men swinging their arms for circulation, never a sound had disturbed his sleep. Rag-pickers and other toilers of the night knew the house, and often saw a light burning in the lawyer's private room at unholy hours. Even thieves, as they passed by, said, "That is his house," and respected

it. The morning he gave to the poor, the midday hours to criminals, the evening to law work.

Thus the gift of observation that characterized Popinot was necessarily *bifrons;* he could guess the virtues of a pauper—good feelings nipped, fine actions in embryo, unrecognized self-sacrifice, just as he could read at the bottom of a man's conscience the faintest outlines of a crime, the slenderest threads of wrongdoing, and infer all the rest.

Popinot's inherited fortune was a thousand crowns a year. His wife, sister to M. Bianchon *senior,* a doctor at Sancerre, had brought him about twice as much. She, dying five years since, had left her fortune to her husband. As the salary of a supernumerary judge is not large, and Popinot had been a fully salared judge only for four years, we may guess his reasons for parsimony in all that concerned his person and mode of life, when we consider how small his means were and how great his beneficence. Besides, is not such indifference to dress as stamped Popinot an absent-minded man, a distinguishing mark of scientific attainment, of art passionately pursued, of a perpetually active mind? To complete this portrait, it will be enough to add that Popinot was one of the few judges of the Court of the Seine on whom the ribbon of the Legion of Honor had not been conferred.

Such was the man who had been instructed by the President of the Second Chamber of the Court—to which Popinot had belonged since his reinstatement among the judges in civil law—to examine the Marquis d'Espard at the request of his wife, who sued for a Commission in Lunacy.

The Rue du Fouarre, where so many unhappy wretches swarmed in the early morning, would be deserted by nine o'clock, and as gloomy and squalid as ever. Bianchon put his horse to a trot in order to find his uncle in the midst of his business. It was not without a smile that he thought of the curious contrast the judge's appearance would make in Madame d'Espard's room; but he promised himself that he would persuade him to dress in a way that should not be too ridiculous.

"If only my uncle happens to have a new coat!" said Bianchon to himself as he turned into the Rue du Fouarre, where a pale light shone from the parlor windows. "I shall do well, I believe, to talk that over with Lavienne."

At the sound of wheels half a score of startled paupers came out from under the gateway, and took off their hats on recognizing Bianchon; for the doctor, who treated gratuitously the sick recommended to him by the lawyer, was not less well known than he to the poor creatures assembled there.

Bianchon found his uncle in the middle of the parlor, where the benches were occupied by patients presenting such grotesque singularities of costume as would have made the least artistic passer-by turn round to gaze at them. A draughtsman—a Rembrandt, if there were one in our day—might have conceived of one of his finest compositions from seeing these children of misery, in artless attitudes, and all silent.

Here was the rugged countenance of an old man with a white beard and an apostolic head—a Saint Peter ready to

hand; his chest, partly uncovered, showed salient muscles, the evidence of an iron constitution which had served him as a fulcrum to resist a whole poem of sorrows. There a young woman was suckling her youngest-born to keep it from crying, while another of about five stood between her knees. Her white bosom, gleaming amid rags, the baby with its transparent flesh-tints, and the brother, whose attitude promised a street Arab in the future, touched the fancy with pathos by its almost graceful contrast with the long row of faces crimson with cold, in the midst of which sat this familly group. Further away, an old woman, pale and rigid, had the repulsive look of rebellious pauperism, eager to avenge all its past woes in one day of violence.

There, again, was the young workman, weakly and indolent, whose brightly intelligent eye revealed fine faculties crushed by necessity struggled within vain, saying nothing of his sufferings, and nearly dead for lack of an opportunity to squeeze between the bars of the vast stews where the wretched swim round and round and devour each other.

The majority were women; their husbands, gone to their work, left it to them, no doubt, to plead the cause of the family with the ingenuity which characterizes the woman of the people, who is almost always queen in her hovel. You would have seen a torn bandana on every head, on every form a skirt deep in mud, ragged kerchiefs, worn and dirty jackets, but eyes that burnt like live coals. It was a horrible assemblage, raising at first sight a feeling of disgust, but giving a certain sense of terror the instant you perceived that the resignation of these souls, all engaged in the struggle for every necessary of life, was purely fortuitous, a speculation on benevolence. The two tallow candles which lighted the parlor flickered in a sort of fog caused by the fetid atmosphere of the ill-ventilated room.

The magistrate himself was not the least picturesque figure in the midst of this assembly. He had on his head a rusty cotton night-cap; as he had no cravat, his neck was visible, red with cold and wrinkled, in contrast with the threadbare collar of his old dressing-gown. His worn face had the half-stupid look that comes of absorbed attention. His lips, like those of all men who work, were puckered up like a bag with the strings drawn tight. His knitted brows seemed to bear the burden of all the sorrows confided to him: he felt, analyzed, and judged them all. As watchful as a Jew money-lender, he never raised his eyes from his books and registers but to look into the very heart of the persons he was examining, with the flashing glance by which a miser expresses his alarm.

Lavienne, standing behind his master, ready to carry out his orders, served no doubt as a sort of police, and welcomed new-comers by encouraging them to get over their shyness. When the doctor appeared there was a stir on the benches. Lavienne turned his head, and was strangely surprised to see Bianchon.

"Ah! It is you, old boy!" exclaimed Popinot, stretching himself. "What brings you so early?"

"I was afraid lest you should make an official visit about which I wish to

speak to you before I could see you."

"Well," said the lawyer, addressing a stout little woman who was still standing close to him, "if you do not tell me what it is you want, I cannot guess it, child."

"Make haste," said Lavienne. "Do not waste other people's time."

"Monsieur," said the woman at last, turning red, and speaking so low as only to be heard by Popinot and Lavienne, "I have a green-grocery truck, and I have my last baby out at nurse, and I owe for his keep. Well, I had hidden my little bit of money——"

"Yes; and your man took it?" said Popinot, guessing the sequel.

"Yes, sir."

"What is your name?"

"La Pomponne."

"And your husband's?"

"Toupinet."

"Rue du Petit-Banquier?" said Popinot, turning over his register. "He is in prison," he added, reading a note at the margin of the section in which this family was described.

"For debt, my kind Monsieur."

Popinot shook his head.

"But I have nothing to buy any stock for my truck; the landlord came yesterday and made me pay up; otherwise I should have been turned out."

Lavienne bent over his master, and whispered in his ear.

"Well, how much do you want to buy fruit in the market?"

"Why, my good Monsieur, to carry on my business, I should want—Yes, I should certainly want ten francs."

Popinot signed to Lavienne, who took ten francs out of a large bag, and handed them to the woman, while the lawyer made a note of the loan in his ledger. As he saw the thrill of delight that made the poor hawker tremble, Bianchon understood the apprehensions that must have agitated her on her way to the lawyer's house.

"You next," said Lavienne to the old man with the white beard.

Bianchon drew the servant aside, and asked him how long this audience would last.

"Monsieur has had two hundred persons this morning, and there are eighty to be turned off," said Lavienne. "You will have time to pay your early visit, sir."

"Here, my boy," said the lawyer, turning round and taking Horace by the arm; "here are two addresses near this —one in the Rue de Seine, and the other in the Rue de l'Arbalète. Go there at once. Rue de Seine, a young girl has just asphyxiated herself; and Rue de l'Arbalète, you will find a man to remove to your hospital. I will wait breakfast for you."

Bianchon returned an hour later. The Rue du Fouarre was deserted; day was beginning to dawn there; his uncle had gone up to his rooms; the last poor wretch whose misery the judge had relieved was departing, and Lavienne's money bag was empty.

"Well, how are they going on?" asked the old lawyer, as the doctor came in.

"The man is dead," replied Bianchon; "the girl will get over it."

Since the eye and hand of a woman had been lacking, the flat in which Popinot lived had assumed an aspect in harmony with its master's. The indifference of a man who is absorbed in one dominant idea had set its stamp

of eccentricity on everything. Everywhere lay unconquerable dust, every object was adapted to a wrong purpose with a pertinacity suggestive of a bachelor's home. There were papers in the flower vases, empty ink-bottles on the tables, plates that had been forgotten, matches used as tapers for a minute when something had to be found, drawers or boxes half turned out and left unfinished; in short, all the confusions and vacancies resulting from plans for order never carried out. The lawyer's private room, especially disordered by this incessant rummage, bore witness to his unresting pace, the hurry of a man overwhelmed with business, hunted by contradictory necessities. The bookcase looked as if it had been sacked; there were books scattered over everything, some piled up open, one on another, others on the floor face downwards; registers of proceedings laid on the floor in rows, lengthwise, in front of the shelves; and that floor had not been polished for two years.

The tables and shelves were covered with *ex votos,* the offerings of the grateful poor. On a pair of blue glass jars which ornamented the chimney-shelf there were two glass balls, of which the core was made up of many colored fragments, giving them the appearance of some singular natural product. Against the wall hung frames of artificial flowers, and decorations in which Popinot's initials were surrounded by hearts and everlasting flowers. Here were boxes of elaborate and useless cabinet work; there letter-weights carved in the style of work done by convicts in penal servitude. These masterpieces of patience, enigmas of gratitude, and withered bouquets gave the lawyer's room the appearance of a toyshop. The good man used these works of art as hiding-places which he filled with bills, worn-out pens, and scraps of paper. All these pathetic witnesses to his divine charity were thick with dust, dingy, and faded.

Some birds, beautifully stuffed, but eaten by moth, perched in this wilderness of trumpery, presided over by an Angora cat, Madame Popinot's pet, restored to her no doubt with all the graces of life by some impecunious naturalist, who thus repaid a gift of charity with a perennial treasure. Some local artist whose heart had misguided his brush had painted portraits of M. and Madame Popinot. Even in the bedroom there were embroidered pin-cushions, landscapes, in cross-stitch, and crosses in folded paper, so elaborately cockled as to show the senseless labor they had cost.

The window-curtains were black with smoke, and the hangings absolutely colorless. Between the fireplace and the large square table at which the magistrate worked, the cook had set two cups of coffee on a small table, and two armchairs, in mahogany and horsehair, awaited the uncle and nephew. As daylight, darkened by the windows, could not penetrate to this corner, the cook had left two dips burning, whose unsnuffed wicks showed a sort of mushroom growth, giving the red light which promises length of life to the candle from slowness of combustion—a discovery due to some miser.

"My dear uncle, you ought to wrap yourself more warmly when you go down to that parlor."

"I cannot bear to keep them waiting,

poor souls!—Well, and what do you want of me?"

"I have come to ask you to dine to-morrow with the Marquise d'Espard."

"A relation of ours?" asked Popinot, with such genuine absence of mind that Bianchon laughed.

"No, uncle; the Marquise d'Espard is a high and puissant lady, who has laid before the Courts a petition desiring that a Commission in Lunacy should sit on her husband, and you are appointed——"

"And you want me to dine with her! Are you mad?" said the lawyer, taking up the code of proceedings. "Here, only read this article, prohibiting any magistrate's eating or drinking in the house of either of two parties whom he is called upon to decide between. Let her come and see me, your Marquise, if she has anything to say to me. I was in fact to go to examine her husband to-morrow, after working the case up to-night."

He rose, took up a packet of papers that lay under a weight where he could see it, and after reading the title, he said—

"Here is the affidavit. Since you take an interest in this high and puissant lady, let us see what she wants."

Popinot wrapped his dressing-gown across his body, from which it was constantly slipping and leaving his chest bare; he sopped his bread in the half-cold coffee, and opened the petition, which he read, allowing himself to throw in a parenthesis now and then, and some discussions, in which his nephew took part:—

"'To Monsieur the President of the Civil Tribunal of the Lower Court of the Department of the Seine, sitting at the Palais de Justice.

"'Madame Jeanne Clémentine Athénaïs de Blamont-Chauvry, wife of M. Charles Maurice Marie Andoche, Comte de Nègrepelisse, Marquis d'Espard'—a very good family—'landowner, the said Mme. d'Espard living in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, No. 104, and the said M. d'Espard in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, No. 22.'—To be sure, the President told me he lived in this part of the town—'having for her solicitor Maître Desroches'—Desroches! a pettifogging jobber, a man looked down upon by his brother lawyers, and who does his clients no good——"

"Poor fellow!" said Bianchon, "unluckily he has no money, and he rushes round like the Devil in holy water—That is all."

"'Has the honor to submit to you, Monsieur the President, that for a year past the moral and intellectual powers of her husband, M. d'Espard, have undergone so serious a change, that at the present day they have reached the state of dementia and idiocy provided for by Article 448 of the Civil Code, and require the application of the remedies set forth by that article, for the security of his fortune and his person, and to guard the interest of his children whom he keeps to live with him.

"'That, in point of fact, the mental condition of M. d'Espard, which for some years has given grounds for alarm based on the system he has pursued in the management of his affairs, has reached, during the last twelvemonth, a deplorable depth of depression; that his infirm will was the first thing to

show the results of the malady; and that its effete state leaves M. the Marquis d'Espard exposed to all the perils of his incompetency, as is proved by the following facts:—

"'For a long time all the income accruing from M. d'Espard's estates are paid, without any reasonable cause, or even temporary advantage, into the hands of an old woman, whose repulsive ugliness is generally remarked on, named Madame Jeanrenaud, living sometimes in Paris, Rue de la Vrillière, No. 8, sometimes at Villeparisis, near Claye, in the Department of Seine at Marne, and for the benefit of her son, aged thirty-six, an officer in the ex-Imperial Guards, whom the Marquis d'Espard has placed by his influence in the King's Guards as Major in the First Regiment of Cuirassiers. These two persons, who in 1814 were in extreme poverty, have since then purchased house-property of considerable value; among other items, quite recently, a large house in the Grande Rue Verte, where the said Jeanrenaud is laying out considerable sums in order to settle there with the woman Jeanrenaud, intending to marry; these sums amount already to more than a hundred thousand francs. The marriage has been arranged by the intervention of M. d'Espard with his banker, one Mongenod, whose niece he has asked in marriage for the said Jeanrenaud, promising to use his influence to procure him the title and dignity of Baron. This has in fact been secured by his Majesty's letters patent, dated December 29th of last year, at the request of the Marquis d'Espard, as can be proved by his Excellency the Keeper of the Seals, if the Court should think proper to require his testimony.

"'That no reason, not even such as morality and the law would concur in disapproving, can justify the influence which the said Mme. Jeanrenaud exerts over M. d'Espard, who, indeed, sees her very seldom; nor account for his strange affection for the said Baron Jeanrenaud, Major, with whom he has but little intercourse. And yet their power is so considerable, that whenever they need money, if only to gratify a mere whim, this lady or her son——' Heh, heh! *no reason even such as morality and the law concur in disapproving!* What does the clerk or the attorney mean to insinuate?" said Popinot.

Bianchon laughed.

"'This lady, or her son, obtain whatever they ask of the Marquis d'Espard without demur; and if he has not ready money, M. d'Espard draws bills to be paid by the said Mongenod, who has offered to give evidence to that effect for the petitioner.

"'That, moreover, in further proof of these facts, lately, on the occasion of the renewal of the leases on the Espard estate, the farmers having paid a considerable premium for the renewal of their leases on the old terms, M. Jeanrenaud at once secured the payment of it into his own hands.

"'That the Marquis d'Espard parts with these sums of money so little of his own free-will, that when he was spoken to on the subject he seemed to remember nothing of the matter; that whenever anybody of any weight has questioned him as to his devotion to these two persons, his replies have shown so complete an absence of ideas

and of sense of his own interests, that there obviously must be some occult cause at work to which the petitioner begs to direct the eye of justice, inasmuch as it is impossible but that this cause should be criminal, malignant, and wrongful, or else of a nature to come under medical jurisdiction; unless this influence is of the kind which constitutes an abuse of moral power—such as can only be described by the word *possession*——' The devil!" exclaimed Popinot. "What do you say to that, doctor? These are strange statements."

"They might certainly," said Bianchon, "be an effect of magnetic force."

"Then do you believe in Mesmer's nonsense, and his tub, and seeing through walls?"

"Yes, uncle," said the doctor gravely. "As I heard you read that petition I thought of that. I assure you that I have verified, in another sphere of action, several analogous facts proving the unlimited influence one man may acquire over another. In contradiction to the opinion of my brethren, I am perfectly convinced of the power of the will regarded as a motor force. All collusion and charlatanism apart, I have seen the results of such a possession. Actions promised during sleep by a magnetized patient to the magnetizer have been scrupulously performed on waking. The will of one had become the will of the other."

"Every kind of action?"

"Yes."

"Even a criminal act?"

"Even a crime."

"If it were not from you, I would not listen to such a thing."

"I will make you witness it," said Bianchon.

"Hm, hm," muttered the lawyer. "But supposing that this so-called possession fell under this class of facts, it would be difficult to prove it as legal evidence."

"If this woman Jeanrenaud is so hideously old and ugly, I do not see what other means of fascination she can have used," observed Bianchon.

"But," observed the lawyer, "in 1814, the time at which this fascination is supposed to have taken place, this woman was fourteen years younger; if she had been connected with M. d'Espard ten years before that, these calculations take us back four-and-twenty years, to a time when the lady may have been young and pretty, and have won for herself and her son a power over M. d'Espard which some men do not know how to evade. Though the source of this power in reprehensible in the sight of justice, it is justifiable in the eye of nature. Madame Jeanrenaud may have been aggrieved by the marriage, contracted probably at about that time, between the Marquis d'Espard and Mademoiselle de Blamont-Chauvry, and at the bottom of all this there may be nothing more than the rivalry of two women, since the Marquis has for a long time lived apart from Mme. d'Espard."

"But her repulsive ugliness, uncle."

"Power of fascination is in direct proportion to ugliness," said the lawyer; "that is an old story. And then think of the smallpox, doctor. But to proceed.

"'That so long ago as in 1815, in order to supply the sums of money required by these two persons, the Mar-

quis d'Espard went with his two children to live in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, in rooms quite unworthy of his name and rank'—well, we may live as we please—'that he keeps his two children there, the Comte Clément d'Espard and Vicomte Camille d'Espard, in a style of living quite unsuited to their future prospects, their name and fortune; that he often wants money, to such a point, that not long since the landlord, one Mariast, put in an execution on the furniture in the rooms; that when this execution was carried out in his presence, the Marquis d'Espard helped the bailiff, whom he treated like a man of rank, paying him all the marks of attention and respect which he would have shown to a person of superior birth and dignity to himself.'"

The uncle and nephew glanced at each other and laughed.

"'That, moreover, every act of his life, besides the facts with reference to the widow Jeanrenaud and the Baron Jeanrenaud, her son, are those of a madman; that for nearly ten years he has given his thoughts exclusively to China, its customs, manners, and history; that he refers everything to a Chinese origin; that when he is questioned on the subject, he confuses the events of the day and the business of yesterday with facts relating to China; that he censures the acts of the Government and the conduct of the King, though he is personally much attached to him, by comparing them with the politics of China;

"'That this monomania has driven the Marquis d'Espard to conduct devoid of all sense: against the customs of men of rank, and, in opposition to his own professed ideas as to the duties of the nobility, he has joined a commercial undertaking, for which he constantly draws bills which, as they fall due, threaten both his honor and his fortune, since they stamp him as a trader, and in default of payment may lead to his being declared insolvent; that these debts, which are owing to stationers, printers, lithographers, and print-colorists, who have supplied the materials for his publication, called *A Picturesque History of China,* now coming out in parts, are so heavy that these tradesmen have requested the petitioner to apply for a Commission in Lunacy with regard to the Marquis d'Espard in order to save their own credit.'"

"The man is mad!" exclaimed Bianchon.

"You think so, do you?" said his uncle. "If you listen to only one bell, you hear only one sound."

"But it seems to me——" said Bianchon.

"But it seems to me," said Popinot, "that if any relation of mine wanted to get hold of the management of my affairs, and if, instead of being a humble lawyer, whose colleagues can, any day, verify what his condition is, I were a duke of the realm, an attorney with a little cunning, like Desroches, might bring just such a petition against me.

"'That his children's education has been neglected for this monomania; and that he has taught them, against all the rules of education, the facts of Chinese history, which contradict the tenets of the Catholic Church. He also has them taught the Chinese dialects.'"

"Here Desroches strikes me as funny," said Bianchon.

"The petition is drawn up by his head clerk Godeschal, who, as you know, is not strong in Chinese," said the lawyer.

"'That he often leaves his children destitute of the most necessary things; that the petitioner, notwithstanding her entreaties, can never see them; that the said Marquis d'Espard brings them to her only once a year; that, knowing the privations to which they are exposed, she makes vain efforts to give them the things most necessary for their existence, and which they require——' Oh! Madame la Marquise, this is preposterous. By proving too much you prove nothing.—My dear boy," said the old man, laying the document on his knee, "where is the mother who ever lacked heart and wit and yearning to such a degree as to fall below the inspirations suggested by her animal instinct? A mother is as cunning to get at her children as a girl can be in the conduct of a love intrigue. If your Marquise really wanted to give her children food and clothes, the Devil himself would not have hindered her, heh? That is rather too big a fable for an old lawyer to swallow!—To proceed.

"'That at the age the said children have now attained it is necessary that steps should be taken to preserve them from the evil effects of such an education; that they should be provided for as beseems their rank, and that they should cease to have before their eyes the sad example of their father's conduct;

"'That there are proofs in support of these allegations which the Court can easily order to be produced. Many times has M. d'Espard spoken of the judge of the Twelfth Arrondissement as a mandarin of the third class; he often speaks of the professors of the Collège Henri IV. as "men of letters"'—and that offends them! 'In speaking of the simplest things, he says, "They were not done so in China"; in the course of the most ordinary conversation he will sometimes allude to Madame Jeanrenaud, or sometimes to events which happened in the time of Louis XIV., and then sit plunged in the darkest melancholy; sometimes he fancies he is in China. Several of his neighbors, among others, one Edmé Becker, medical student, and Jean Baptiste Frémiot, a professor, living under the same roof, are of opinion, after frequent intercourse with the Marquis d'Espard, that his monomania with regard to everything Chinese is the result of a scheme laid by the said Baron Jeanrenaud and the widow his mother to bring about the deadening of all the Marquis d'Espard's mental faculties, since the only service which Mme. Jeanrenaud appears to render M. d'Espard is to procure him everything that relates to the Chinese Empire;

"'Finally, that the petitioner is prepared to show to the Court that the moneys absorbed by the said Baron and Mme. Jeanrenaud between 1814 and 1828 amount to not less than one million francs.

"'In confirmation of the facts herein set forth, the petitioner can bring the evidence of persons who are in the habit of seeing the Marquis d'Espard, whose names and professions are subjoined, many of whom have urged her to demand a commission in lunacy to declare

M. d'Espard incapable of managing his own affairs, as being the only way to preserve his fortune from the effects of his maladministration and his children from his fatal influence.

"'Taking all this into consideration, M. le Président, and the affidavits subjoined, the petitioner desires that it may please you, inasmuch as the foregoing facts sufficiently prove the insanity and incompetency of the Marquis d'Espard herein described with his titles and residence, to order that, to the end that he may be declared incompetent by law, this petition and the documents in evidence may be laid before the King's public prosecutor; and that you will charge one of the judges of this Court to make his report to you on any day you may be pleased to name, and thereupon to pronounce judgment,' etc.

"And here," said Popinot, "is the President's order instructing me!—Well, what does the Marquise d'Espard want with me? I know everything. But I shall go to-morrow with my registrar to see M. le Marquis, for this does not seem at all clear to me."

"Listen, my dear uncle, I have never asked the least little favor of you that had to do with your legal functions; well, I now beg you to show Madame d'Espard the kindness which her situation deserves. If she came here, you would listen to her?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, go and listen to her in her own house. Madame d'Espard is a sickly, nervous, delicate woman, who would faint in your rat's hole of a place. Go in the evening, instead of accepting her dinner, since the law forbids your eating or drinking at your client's expense."

"And does not the law forbid you from taking any legacy from your dead?" said Popinot, fancying that he saw a touch of irony on his nephew's lips.

"Come, uncle, if it were only to enable you to get at the truth of this business, grant my request. You will come as the examining judge, since matters do not seem to you very clear. Deuce take it! It is as necessary to cross-question the Marquise as it is to examine the Marquis."

"You are right," said the lawyer. "It is quite possible that it is she who is mad. I will go."

"I will call for you. Write down in your engagement book: 'To-morrow evening at nine, Madame d'Espard.'—Good!" said Bianchon, seeing his uncle make a note of the engagement.

Next evening at nine Bianchon mounted his uncle's dusty staircase, and found him at work on the statement of some complicated judgment. The coat Lavienne had ordered of the tailor had not been sent, so Popinot put on his old stained coat, and was the Popinot unadorned whose appearance made those laugh who did not know the secrets of his private life. Bianchon, however, obtained permission to pull his cravat straight, and to button his coat, and he hid the stains by crossing the breast of it with the right side over the left, and so displaying the new front of the cloth. But in a minute the judge rucked the coat up over his chest by the way in which he stuffed his hands into his pockets, obeying an

irresistible habit. Thus the coat, deeply wrinkled both in front and behind, made a sort of hump in the middle of the back, leaving a gap between the waistcoat and trousers through which his shirt showed. Bianchon, to his sorrow, only discovered this crowning absurdity at the moment when his uncle entered the Marquise's room.

A brief sketch of the person and the career of the lady in whose presence the doctor and the judge now found themselves is necessary for an understanding of her interview with Popinot.

Madame d'Espard had, for the last seven years, been very much the fashion in Paris, where Fashion can raise and drop by turns various personages who, now great and now small, that is to say, in view or forgotten, are at last quite intolerable—as discarded ministers are, and every kind of decayed sovereignty. These flatterers of the past, odious with their stale pretensions, know everything, speak ill of everything, and, like ruined profligates, are friends with all the world. Since her husband had separated from her in 1815, Madame d'Espard must have married in the beginning of 1812. Her children, therefore, were aged respectively fifteen and thirteen. By what luck was the mother of a family, about three-and-thirty years of age, still the fashion?

Though Fashion is capricious, and no one can foresee who shall be her favorites, though she often exalts a banker's wife, or some woman of very doubtful elegance and beauty, it certainly seems supernatural when Fashion puts on constitutional airs and gives promotion for age. But in this case Fashion had done as the world did, and accepted Madame d'Espard as still young.

The Marquise, who was thirty-three by her register of birth, was twenty-two in a drawing-room in the evening. But by what care, what artifice! Elaborate curls shaded her temples. She condemned herself to live in twilight, affecting illness so as to sit under the protecting tones of light filtered through muslin. Like Diane de Poitiers, she used cold water in her bath, and, like her again, the Marquise slept on a horsehair mattress, with morocco-covered pillows to preserve her hair; she ate very little, only drank water, and observed monastic regularity in the smallest actions of her life.

This severe system has, it is said, been carried so far as to the use of ice instead of water, and nothing but cold food, by a famous Polish lady of our day who spends a life, now verging on a century old, after the fashion of a town belle. Fated to live as long as Marion Delorme, whom history has credited with surviving to be a hundred and thirty, the old vice-queen of Poland, at the age of nearly a hundred, has the heart and brain of youth, a charming face, an elegant shape; and in her conversation, sparkling with brilliancy like fagots in the fire, she can compare the men and books of our literature with the men and books of the eighteenth century. Living in Warsaw, she orders her caps of Herbault in Paris. She is a great lady with the amiability of a mere girl; she swims, she runs like a schoolboy, and can sink on to a sofa with the grace of a young coquette; she mocks at death, and laughs at life. After having astonished the Emperor

Alexander, she can still amaze the Emperor Nicholas by the splendor of her entertainments. She can still bring tears to the eyes of a youthful lover, for her age is whatever she pleases, and she has the exquisite self-devotion of a *grisette*. In short, she is herself a fairy tale, unless, indeed, she is a fairy.

Had Madame d'Espard known Madame Zayonseck? Did she mean to imitate her career? Be that as it may, the Marquise proved the merits of the treatment; her complexion was clear, her brow unwrinkled, her figure, like that of Henri II.'s lady-love, preserved the litheness, the freshness, the covered charms which bring a woman love and keep it alive. The simple precautions of this course, suggested by art and nature, and perhaps by experience, had met in her with a general system which confirmed the results. The Marquise was absolutely indifferent to everything that was not herself: men amused her, but no man had ever caused her those deep agitations which stir both natures to their depths, and wreck one on the other. She knew neither hatred nor love. When she was offended, she avenged herself coldly, quietly, at her leisure, waiting for the opportunity to gratify the ill-will she cherished against anybody who dwelt in her unfavorable remembrance. She made no fuss, she did not excite herself; she talked, because she knew that by two words a woman may cause the death of three men.

She had parted from M. d'Espard with the greatest satisfaction. Had he not taken with him two children who at present were troublesome, and in the future would stand in the way of her pretensions? Her most intimate friends, as much as her least persistent admirers, seeing about her none of Cornelia's jewels, who come and go, and unconsciously betray their mother's age, took her for quite a young woman. The two boys, about whom she seemed so anxious in her petition, were, like their father, as unknown in the world as the northwest passage is unknown to navigators. M. d'Espard was supposed to be an eccentric personage, who had deserted his wife without having the smallest cause for complaint against her.

Mistress of herself at two-and-twenty, and mistress of her fortune of twenty-six thousand francs a year, the Marquise hesitated long before deciding on a course of action and ordering her life. Though she benefited by the expenses her husband had incurred in his house, though she had all the furniture, the carriages, the horses, in short, all the details of a handsome establishment, she lived a retired life during the years 1816, 17, and 18, a time when families were recovering from the disasters resulting from political tempests. She belonged to one of the most important and illustrious families of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and her parents advised her to live with them as much as possible after the separation forced upon her by her husband's inexplicable caprice.

In 1820 the Marquise roused herself from her lethargy; she went to Court, appeared at parties, and entertained in her own house. From 1821 to 1827 she lived in great style, and made herself remarked for her taste and her dress; she had a day, an hour, for receiving visits, and ere long she had seated her-

self on the throne, occupied before her by Madame la Vicomtesse de Beauséant, the Duchesse de Langeais, and Madame Firmiani—who on her marriage with M. de Camps had resigned the scepter in favor of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, from whom Madame d'Espard snatched it. The world knew nothing beyond this of the private life of the Marquise d'Espard. She seemed likely to shine for long on the Parisian horizon, like the sun near its setting, but which will never set.

The Marquise was on terms of great intimacy with a duchess as famous for beauty as for her attachment to a prince just now in banishment, but accustomed to play a leading part in every prospective government. Madame d'Espard was also the friend of a foreign lady, with whom a famous and very wily Russian diplomat was in the habit of discussing public affairs. And then an antiquated countess, who was accustomed to shuffle the cards for the great game of politics, had adopted her in a maternal fashion. Thus, to any man of high ambitions, Madame d'Espard was preparing a covert but very real influence to follow the public and frivolous ascendency she now owed to fashion. Her drawing-room was acquiring political individuality: "What do they say at Madame d'Espard's?" "Are they against the measure in Madame d'Espard's drawing-room?" were questions repeated by a sufficient number of simpletons to give the flock of the faithful who surrounded her the importance of a coterie. A few damaged politicians whose wounds she had bound up, and whom she flattered, pronounced her as capable in diplomacy as the wife of the Russian ambassador to London. The Marquise had indeed several times suggested to deputies or to peers words and ideas that had rung through Europe She had often judged correctly of certain events on which her circle of friends dared not express an opinion. The principal persons about the Court came in the evening to play whist in her rooms.

Then she also had the qualities of her defects; she was thought to be—and she was—discreet. Her friendship seemed to be stanch; she worked for her protégés with a persistency which showed that she cared less for patronage than for increased influence. This conduct was based on her dominant passion: Vanity. Conquests and pleasure, which so many women love, to her seemed only means to an end; she aimed at living on every point of the largest circle that life can describe.

Among the men still young, and to whom the future belonged, who crowded her drawing-room on great occasions, were to be seen MM. de Marsay and de Ronquerolles, de Montriveau, de la Roche-Hugon, de Sérizy, Ferraud, Maxime de Trailles, de Listomère, the two Vandenesses, du Châtelet, and others. She would frequently receive a man whose wife she would not admit, and her power was great enough to induce certain ambitious men to submit to these hard conditions, such as two famous royalist bankers, M. de Nucingen and Ferdinand du Tillet. She had so thoroughly studied the strength and the weakness of Paris life, that her conduct had never given any man the smallest advantage over her. An enormous price might have been set on a note or letter,

by which she might have compromised herself, without one being produced.

If an arid soul enabled her to play her part to the life, her person was no less available for it. She had a youthful figure. Her voice was, at will, soft and fresh, or clear and hard. She possessed in the highest degree the secret of that aristocratic pose by which a woman wipes out the past. The Marquise knew well the art of setting an immense space between herself and the sort of man who fancies he may be familiar after some chance advances. Her imposing gaze could deny everything. In her conversation fine and beautiful sentiments and noble resolutions flowed naturally, as it seemed, from a pure heart and soul; but in reality she was all self, and quite capable of blasting a man who was clumsy in his negotiations, at the very time when she was shamefully making a compromise for the benefit of her own interest.

Rastignac, in trying to fasten on to this woman, had discerned her to be the cleverest of tools, but he had not yet used it; far from handling it, he was already finding himself crushed by it. This young *Condottiere* of the brain, condemned, like Napoleon, to give battle constantly, while knowing that a single defeat would prove the grave of his fortunes, had met a dangerous adversary in his protectress. For the first time in his turbulent life, he was playing a game with a partner worthy of him. He saw a place as Minister in the conquest of Madame d'Espard, so he was her tool till he could make her his—a perilous beginning.

The Hôtel d'Espard needed a large household, and the Marquise had a great number of servants. The grand receptions were held in the ground-floor rooms, but she lived on the first floor of the house. The perfect order of a fine staircase splendidly decorated, and rooms fitted in the dignified style which formerly prevailed at Versailles, spoke of an immense fortune. When the judge saw the carriage gates thrown open to admit his nephew's cab, he took in with a rapid glance the lodge, the porter, the courtyard, the stables, the arrangement of the house, the flowers that decorated the stairs, the perfect cleanliness of the banisters, walls, and carpets, and counted the footmen in livery who, as the bell rang, appeared on the landing. His eyes, which only yesterday in his parlor had sounded the dignity of misery under the muddy clothing of the poor, now studied with the same penetrating vision the furniture and splendor of the rooms he passed through, to pierce to the misery of grandeur.

"M. Popinot.—M. Bianchon."

The two names were pronounced at the door of the boudoir where the Marquise was sitting, a pretty room recently refurnished, and looking out on the garden behind the house. At the moment Madame d'Espard was seated in one of the old *rococo* armchairs of which Madame had set the fashion. Rastignac was at her left hand on a low chair, in which he looked settled like an Italian lady's "cousin." A third person was standing by the corner of the chimney-piece. As the shrewd doctor had suspected, the Marquise was a woman of a parched and wiry constitution. But for her regimen her complexion must have taken the ruddy tone that is produced by constant heat; but she

added to the effect of her acquired pallor by the strong colors of the stuffs she hung her rooms with, or in which she dressed. Reddish-brown, marone, bistre with a golden light in it, suited her to perfection. Her boudoir, copied from that of a famous lady then at the height of fashion in London, was in tan-colored velvet; but she had added various details of ornament which moderated the pompous splendor of this royal hue. Her hair was dressed like a gril's in bands ending in curls, which emphasized the rather long oval of her face; but an oval face is as majestic as a round one is ignoble. The mirrors, cut with facets to lengthen or flatten the face at will, amply prove the rule as applied to the physiognomy.

On seeing Popinot, who stood in the doorway craning his neck like a startled animal, with his left hand in his pocket, and the right hand holding a hat with a greasy lining, the Marquise gave Rastignac a look where lay a germ of mockery. The good man's rather foolish appearance was so completely in harmony with his grotesque figure and sacred looks, that Rastignac, catching sight of Bianchon's dejected expression of humiliation through his uncle, could not help laughing, and turned away. The Marquise bowed a greeting, and made a great effort to rise from her seat, falling back again, not without grace, with an air of apologizing for her incivility by affected weakness.

At this instant the person who was standing between the fireplace and the door bowed slightly, and pushed forward two chairs, which he offered by a gesture to the doctor and the judge; then, when they had seated themselves, he leaned against the wall again, crossing his arms.

A word as to this man. There is living now, in our day, a painter—Decamps—who possesses in the very highest degree the art of commanding your interest in everything he sets before your eyes, whether it be a stone or a man. In this respect his pencil is more skillful than his brush. He will sketch an empty room and leave a broom against the wall. If he chooses, you shall shudder; you shall believe that this broom has just been the instrument of crime, and is dripping with blood; it shall be the broom which the widow Bancal used to clean out the room where Fualdès was murdered. Yes, the painter will touzle that broom like a man in a rage; he will make each hair of it stand on end as though it were on your own bristling scalp; he will make it the interpreter between the secret poem of his imagination and the poem that shall have its birth in yours. After terrifying you by the aspect of that broom, to-morrow he will draw another, and lying by it a cat, asleep, but mysterious in its sleep, shall tell you that this broom is that on which the wife of a German cobbler rides off to the Sabbath on the Brocken. Or it will be a quite harmless broom, on which he will hang the coat of a clerk in the Treasury. Decamps had in his brush what Paganini had in his bow—a magnetically communicative power.

Well, I should have to transfer to my style that striking genius, that marvelous knack of the pencil, to depict the upright, tall, lean man dressed in black, with black hair, who stood there without speaking a word. This gentleman

had a face like a knife-blade, cold and harsh, with a color like Seine water when it is muddy and strewn with fragments of charcoal from a sunken barge. He looked at the floor, listening and passing judgment. His attitude was terrifying. He stood there like the dreadful broom to which Decamps has given the power of revealing a crime. Now and then, in the course of conversation, the Marquise tried to get some tacit advice; but however eager her questioning, he was as grave and as rigid as the statue of the Commendatore.

The worthy Popinot, sitting on the edge of his chair in front of the fire, his hat between his knees, stared at the gilt chandeliers, the clock, and the curiosities with which the chimney-shelf was covered, the velvet and trimmings of the curtains, and all the costly and elegant nothings that a woman of fashion collects about her. He was roused from his homely meditations by Madame d'Espard, who addressed him in a piping tone—

"Monsieur, I owe you a million thanks——"

"A million thanks," thought he to himself, "that is too many; it does not mean one."

"For the trouble you condescend——"

"Condescend!" thought he; "she is laughing at me."

"To take in coming to see an unhappy client, who is too ill to go out——"

Here the lawyer cut the Marquise short by giving her an inquisitorial look, examining the sanitary condition of the unhappy client.

"As sound as a bell," said he to himself.

"Madame," said he, assuming a respectful mien, "you owe me nothing. Although my visit to you is not in strict accordance with the practice of the Court, we ought to spare no pains to discover the truth in cases of this kind. Our judgment is then guided less by the letter of the law than by the promptings of our conscience. Whether I seek the truth here or in my own consulting-room, so long as I find it, all will be well."

While Popinot was speaking, Rastignac was shaking hands with Bianchon; the Marquise welcomed the doctor with a little bow full of gracious significance.

"Who is that?" asked Bianchon in a whisper of Rastignac indicating the dark man.

"The Chevalier d'Espard, the Marquis's brother."

"Your nephew told me," said the Marquise to Popinot, "how much you are occupied, and I know too that you are so good as to wish to conceal your kind actions, so as to release those whom you oblige from the burden of gratitude. The work in Court is most fatiguing, it would seem. Why have they not twice as many judges?"

"Ah, Madame, that would not be difficult; we should be none the worse if they had. But when that happens, fowls will cut their teeth!"

As he heard this speech, so entirely in character with the lawyer's appearance, the Chevalier measured him from head to foot, out of one eye, as much as to say, "We shall easily manage him!"

The Marquise looked at Rastignac, who bent over her. "That is the sort of man," murmured the dandy in her ear, "who is trusted to pass judgments on the life and interests of private individuals."

Like most men who have grown old

in a business, Popinot readily let himself follow the habits he had acquired, more particularly habits of mind. His conversation was all of "the shop." He was fond of questioning those he talked to, forcing them to unexpected conclusions, making them tell more than they wished to reveal. Pozzo di Borgo, it is said, used to amuse himself by discovering other folks' secrets, and entangling them in his diplomatic snares, and thus, by invincible habit showed how his mind was soaked in wiliness. As soon as Popinot had surveyed the ground, so to speak, on which he stood, he saw that it would be necessary to have recourse to the cleverest subtleties, the most elaborately wrapped up and disguised, which were in use in the Court, to detect the truth.

Bianchon sat cold and stern, as a man who has made up his mind to endure torture without revealing his sufferings; but in his heart he wished that his uncle could only trample on this woman as we trample on a viper—a comparison suggested to him by the Marquise's long dress, by the curve of her attitude, her long neck, small head, and undulating movements.

"Well, Monsieur," said Madame d' Espard, "however great my dislike to be or seem selfish, I have been suffering too long to wish that you may settle matters at once. Shall I soon get a favorable decision?"

"Madame, I will do my best to bring matters to a conclusion," said Popinot, with an air of frank good-nature. "Are you ignorant of the reason which made the separation necessary which now subsists between you and the Marquis d'Espard?"

"Yes Monsieur," she replied, evidently prepared with a story to tell. "At the beginning of 1816 M. d'Espard, whose temper had completely changed within three months or so, proposed that we should go to live on one of his estates near Briançon, without any regard for my health, which that climate would have destroyed, or for my habits of life; I refused to go. My refusal gave rise to such unjustifiable reproaches on his part, that from that hour I had my suspicions as to the soundness of his mind. On the following day he left me, leaving me his house and the free use of my own income, and he went to live in the Rue de la Montagne-Saint-Geneviève, taking with him my two children——"

"One moment, Madame," said the lawyer, interrupting her. "What was that income?"

"Twenty-six thousand francs a year," she replied parenthetically. "I at once consulted old M. Bordin as to what I ought to do," she went on; "but it seems that there are so many difficulties in the way of depriving a father of the care of his children, that I was forced to resign myself to remaining alone at the age of twenty-two—an age at which many young women do very foolish things. You have read my petition, no doubt Monsieur; you know the principal facts on which I rely to procure a Commission in Lunacy with regard to M. d'Espard?"

"Have you ever applied to him, Madame, to obtain the care of your children?"

"Yes, Monsieur; but in vain. It is very hard on a mother to be deprived of the affection of her children, par-

ticularly when they can give her such happiness as every woman clings to."

"The elder must be sixteen," said Popinot.

"Fifteen," said the Marquise eagerly.

Here Bianchon and Rastignac looked at each other. Madame d'Espard bit her lips.

"What can the age of my children matter to you?"

"Well, Madame," said the lawyer, without seeming to attach any importance to his words, "a lad of fifteen and his brother, of thirteen, I suppose, have legs and their wits about them; they might come to see you on the sly. If they do not, it is because they obey their father, and to obey him in that matter they must love him very dearly."

"I do not understand," said the Marquise.

"You do not know, perhaps," replied Popinot, "that in your petition your attorney represents your children as being very unhappy with their father?"

Madame d'Espard replied with charming innocence—

"I do not know what my attorney may have put into my mouth."

"Forgive my inferences," said Popinot, "but Justice weighs everything. What I ask you, Madame, is suggested by my wish thoroughly to understand the matter. By your account M. d'Espard deserted you on the most frivolous pretext. Instead of going to Briançon, where he wished to take you, he remained in Paris. This point is not clear. Did he know this Madame Jeanrenaud before his marriage?"

"No Monsieur," replied the Marquise, with some asperity, visible only to Rastignac and the Chevalier d'Espard.

She was offended at being cross-questioned by this lawyer when she had intended to beguile his judgment; but as Popinot still looked stupid from sheer absence of mind, she ended by attributing his interrogatory to the Questioning Spirit of Voltaire's bailiff.

"My parents," she went on, "married me at the age of sixteen to M. d'Espard, whose name, fortune, and mode of life were such as my family looked for in the man who was to be my husband. M. d'Espard was then six-and-twenty; he was a gentleman in the English sense of the word; his manners pleased me, he seemed to have plenty of ambition, and I like ambitious people," she added, looking at Rastignac. "If M. d'Espard had never met that Madame Jeanrenaud, his character, his learning, his acquirements would have raised him—as his friends then believed—to high office in the Government. King Charles X., at that time Monsieur, had the greatest esteem for him, and a peer's seat, an appointment at Court, some important post certainly would have been his. That woman turned his head, and has ruined all the prospects of my family."

"What were M. d'Espard's religious opinions at that time?"

"He was, and is still, a very pious man."

"You do not suppose that Madame Jeanrenaud may have influenced him by mysticism?"

"No, Monsieur."

"You have a very fine house, Madame," said Popinot suddenly, taking his hands out of his pockets, and rising to pick up his coat-tails and warm him-

self. "This boudoir is very nice, those chairs are magnificent, the whole apartment is sumptuous. You must indeed be most unhappy when, seeing yourself here, you know that your children are ill lodged; ill clothed, and ill fed. I can imagine nothing more terrible for a mother."

"Yes, indeed. I should be so glad to give the poor little fellows some amusement, while their father keeps them at work from morning till night at that wretched history of China."

"You give handsome balls; they would enjoy them, but they might acquire a taste for dissipation. However, their father might send them to you once or twice in the course of the winter."

"He brings them here on my birthday and on New Year's Day. On those days M. d'Espard does me the favor of dining here with them."

"It is very singular behavior," said the judge, with an air of conviction. "Have you ever seen this Dame Jean-renaud?"

"My brother-in-law one day, out of interest in his brother——"

"Ah! Monsieur is M. d'Espard's brother?" said the lawyer, interrupting her.

The Chevalier bowed, but did not speak.

"M. d'Espard, who has watched this affair, took me to the Oratoire, where this woman goes to sermon, for she is a Protestant. I saw her; she is not in the least attractive; she looks like a butcher's wife, extremely fat, horribly marked with the smallpox: she has feet and hands like a man's, she squints; in short, she is monstrous!"

"It is inconceivable," said the judge, looking like the most imbecile judge in the whole kingdom. "And this creature lives near here, Rue Verte, in a fine house? There are no plain folks left, it would seem?"

"In a mansion on which her son has spent absurd sums."

"Madame," said Popinot, "I live in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau; I know nothing of such expenses. What do you call absurd sums?"

"Well," said the Marquise, "a stable with five horses and three carriages, a phaeton, a brougham, and a cabriolet."

"That costs a large sum, then?" asked Popinot in surprise.

"Enormous sums!" said Rastignac, intervening. "Such an establishment would cost, for the stables, the keeping the carriages in order, and the liveries for the men, between fifteen and sixteen thousand francs a year."

"Should you think so, Madame?" said the judge, looking much astonished.

"Yes, at least," replied the Marquise.

"And the furniture, too, must have cost a lot of money?"

"More than a hundred thousand francs," replied Madame d'Espard, who could not help smiling at the lawyer's vulgarity.

"Judges, Madame, are apt to be incredulous; it is what they are paid for, and I am incredulous. The Baron Jean-renaud and his mother must have fleeced M. d'Espard most preposterously, if what you say is correct. There is a stable establishment which, by your account, costs sixteen thousand francs a year. Housekeeping, servants' wages, and the gross expenses of the house itself must run to twice as much; that makes a total of from fifty to sixty

thousand francs a year. Do you suppose that these people, formerly so extremely poor, can have so large a fortune? A million yields scarcely forty thousand a year."

"Monsieur, the mother and son invested the money given them by M. d'Espard in the Funds when they were at 60 to 80. I should think their income must be more than sixty thousand francs. And then the son has fine appointments."

"If they spend sixty thousand francs a year," said the judge, "how much do you spend?"

"Well," said Madame d'Espard, "about the same." The Chevalier started a little, the Marquise colored; Bianchon looked at Rastignac; but Popinot preserved an expression of simplicity which quite deceived Madame d'Espard. The Chevalier took no part in the conversation; he saw that all was lost.

"These people, Madame, might be indicted before the superior Court," said Popinot.

"That was my opinion," exclaimed the Marquise, enchanted. "If threatened with the police, they would have come to terms."

"Madame," said Popinot, "when M. d'Espard left you, did he not give you a power of attorney enabling you to manage and control your own affairs?"

"I do not understand the object of all these questions," said the Marquise with petulance. "It seems to me that if you would only consider the state in which I am placed by my husband's insanity, you ought to be troubling yourself about him, and not about me."

"We are coming to that, Madame," said the judge. "Before placing in your hands, or in any others, the control of M. d'Espard's property, supposing he were pronounced incapable, the Court must inquire as to how you have managed your own. If M. d'Espard gave you power, he would have shown confidence in you, and the Court would recognize the fact. Had you any power from him? You might have bought or sold house property or invested money in business?"

"No, Monsieur, the Blamont-Chauvrys are not in the habit of trading," said she, extremely nettled in her pride as an aristocrat, and forgetting the business in hand. "My property is intact, and M. d'Espard gave me no power to act."

The Chevalier put his hand over his eyes not to betray the vexation he felt at his sister-in-law's short-sightedness, for she was ruining herself by her answers. Popinot had gone straight to the mark in spite of his apparent doublings.

"Madame," said the lawyer, indicating the Chevalier, "this gentleman, of course, is your near connection? May we speak openly before these other gentlemen?"

"Speak on," said the Marquise, surprised at this caution.

"Well, Madame, granting that you spend only sixty thousand francs a year, to anyone who sees your stables, your house, your train of servants, and a style of housekeeping which strikes me as far more luxurious than that of the Jeanrenauds, that sum would seem well laid out."

The Marquise bowed an agreement.

"But," continued the judge, "if you have no more than twenty-six thousand francs a year, you may have a hundred thousand francs of debts. The Court

would therefore have a right to imagine that the motives which prompt you to ask that your husband may be deprived of the control of his property are complicated by self-interest and the need for paying your debts—if—you—have—any. The requests addressed to me have interested me in your position; consider fully and make your confession. If my suppositions have hit the truth, there is yet time to avoid the blame which the Court would have a perfect right to express in the saying clauses of the verdict if you could not show your attitude to be absolutely honorable and clear.

"It is our duty to examine the motives of the applicant as well as to listen to the plea of the witness under examination, to ascertain whether the petitioner may not have been prompted by passion, by a desire for money, which is unfortunately too common——"

The Marquise was on Saint Laurence's gridiron.

"And I must have explanations on this point. Madame, I have no wish to call you to account; I only want to know how you have managed to live at the rate of sixty thousand francs a year, and that for some years past. There are plenty of women who achieve this in their housekeeping, but you are not one of those. Tell me, you may have the most legitimate resources, a royal pension, or some claim on the indemnities lately granted; but even then you must have had your husband's authority to receive them."

The Marquise did not speak.

"You must remember," Popinot went on, "that M. d'Espard may wish to enter a protest, and his counsel will have a right to find out whether you have any creditors. This boudoir is newly furnished, your rooms are not now furnished with the things left to you by M. d'Espard in 1816. If, as you did me the honor of informing me, furniture is costly for the Jeanrenauds, it must be yet more so for you, who are a great lady. Though I am a judge, I am but a man; I may be wrong—tell me so. Remember the duties imposed on me by law, and the rigorous inquiries it demands, when the case before it is the suspension from all his functions of the father of a family in the prime of life. So you will pardon me, Madame la Marquise, for laying all these difficulties before you; it will be easy for you to give me an explanation.

"When a man is pronounced incapable of the control of his own affairs, a trustee has to be appointed. Who will be the trustee?"

"His brother," said the Marquise.

The Chevalier bowed. There was a short silence, very uncomfortable for the five persons who were present. The judge, in sport as it were, had laid open the woman's sore place. Popinot's countenance of common, clumsy goodnature, at which the Marquise, the Chevalier, and Rastignac had been inclined to laugh, had gained importance in their eyes. As they stole a look at him, they discerned the various expressions of that eloquent mouth. The ridiculous mortal was a judge of acumen. His studious notice of the boudoir was accounted for: he had started from the gilt elephant supporting the chimney-clock, examining all this luxury, and had ended by reading this woman's soul.

"If the Marquis d'Espard is mad about China, I see that you are not less fond

of its products," said Popinot, looking at the porcelain on the chimney-piece. "But perhaps it was from M. le Marquis that you had these charming Oriental pieces," and he pointed to some precious trifles.

This irony, in very good taste, made Bianchon smile and petrified Rastignac, while the Marquise bit her thin lips.

"Instead of being the protector of a woman placed in a cruel dilemma—an alternative between losing her fortune and her children, and being regarded as her husband's enemy," she said, "you accuse me, Monsieur! You suspect my motives! You must own that your conduct is strange!"

"Madame," said the judge eagerly, "the caution exercised by the Court in such cases as these might have given you, in any other judge, a perhaps less indulgent critic than I am.—And do you suppose that M. d'Espard's lawyer will show you any great consideration? Will he not be suspicious of motives which may be perfectly pure and disinterested? Your life will be at his mercy; he will inquire into it without qualifying his search by the respectful deference I have for you."

"I am much obliged to you, Monsieur," said the Marquise satirically. "Admitting for the moment that I owe thirty thousand, or fifty thousand francs, in the first place, it would be a mere trifle to the d'Espards and the de Blamont-Chauvrys. But if my husband is not in the possession of his mental faculties, would that prevent his being pronounced incapable?"

"No, Madame," said Popinot.

"Although you have questioned me with a sort of cunning which I should not have expected in a judge, and under circumstances where straightforwardness would have answered your purpose," she went on, "I will tell you without subterfuge that my position in the world, and the efforts I have to make to keep up my connection, are not in the least to my taste. I began my life by a long period of solitude; but my children's interest appealed to me; I felt that I must fill their father's place. By receiving my friends, by keeping up all this connection, by contracting these debts, I have secured their future welfare; I have prepared for them a brilliant career where they will find help and favor; and to have what has thus been acquired, many a man of business, lawyer or banker, would gladly pay all it has cost me."

"I appreciate your devoted conduct, Madame," replied Popinot. "It does you honor, and I blame you for nothing. A judge belongs to all; he must know and weigh every fact."

Madame d'Espard's tact and practice in estimating men made her understand that M. Popinot was not to be influenced by any consideration. She had counted on an ambitious lawyer, she had found a man of conscience. She at once thought of finding other means for securing the success of her side.

The servants brought in tea.

"Have you any further explanations to give me, Madame?" said Popinot, seeing these preparations.

"Monsieur," she replied haughtily, "do your business your own way; question M. d'Espard, and you will pity me, I am sure." She raised her head, looking Popinot in the face with pride, mingled

with impertinence; the worthy man bowed himself out respectfully.

"A nice man is your uncle," said Rastignac to Bianchon. "Is he really so dense? Does not he know what the Marquise d'Espard is, what her influence means, her unavowed power over people? The Keeper of the Seals will be with her to-morrow——"

"My dear fellow, how can I help it?" said Bianchon. "Did not I warn you? He is not a man you can get over."

"No," said Rastignac; "he is a man you must run over."

The doctor was obliged to make his bow to the Marquise and her mute Chevalier to catch up Popinot, who, not being the man to endure an embarrassing position, was pacing through the rooms.

"That woman owes a hundred thousand crowns," said the judge, as he stepped into his nephew's cab.

"And what do you think of the case?"

"I?" said the judge. "I never have an opinion till I have gone into everything. To-morrow early I will send to Madame Jeanrenaud to call on me in my private office at four o'clock, to make her explain the facts which concern her, for she is compromised."

"I should very much like to know what the end will be."

"Why, bless me, do not you see that the Marquise is the tool of that tall lean man who never uttered a word? There is a strain of Cain in him, but of the Cain who goes to the Law Courts for his bludgeon, and there, unluckily for him, we keep more than one Damocles' sword."

"Oh, Rastignac! what brought you into that boat, I wonder?" exclaimed Bianchon.

"Ah, we are used to seeing these little family conspiracies," said Popinot. "Not a year passes without a number of verdicts of 'insufficient evidence' against applications of this kind. In our state of society such an attempt brings no dishonor, while we send a poor devil to the galleys if he breaks a pane of glass dividing him from a bowl full of gold. Our Code is not faultless."

"But these are the facts?"

"My boy, do you not know all the judicial romances with which clients impose on their attorneys? If the attorneys condemned themselves to state nothing but the truth, they would not earn enough to keep their office open."

Next, day, at four in the afternoon, a very stout dame, looking a good deal like a cask dressed up in a gown and belt, mounted Judge Popinot's stairs, perspiring and panting. She had, with great difficulty, got out of a green landau, which suited her to a miracle; you could not think of the woman without the landau, or the landau without the woman.

"It is I, my dear sir," said she, appearing in the doorway of the judge's room. "Madame Jeanrenaud, whom you summoned exactly as if I were a thief, neither more nor less."

The common words were spoken in a common voice, broken by the wheezing of asthma, and ending in a cough.

"When I go through a damp place, I can't tell you what I suffer, sir. I shall never make old bones, saving your presence. However, here I am."

The lawyer was quite amazed at the

appearance of this supposed Maréchale d'Ancre. Madame Jeanrenaud's face was pitted with an infinite number of little holes, was very red, with a pug nose and a low forehead, and was as round as a ball; for everything about the good woman was round. She had the bright eyes of a country woman, an honest gaze, a cheerful tone, and chestnut hair held in place by a bonnet cap under a green bonnet decked with a shabby bunch of auriculas. Her stupendous bust was a thing to laugh at, for it made one fear some grotesque explosion every time she coughed. Her enormous legs were of the shape which makes the Paris street boy describe such a woman as being built on piles. The widow wore a green gown trimmed with chinchilla, which looked on her as a splash of dirty oil would look on a bride's veil. In short, everything about her harmonized with her last words: "Here I am."

"Madame," said Popinot, "you are suspected of having used some seductive arts to induce M. d'Espard to hand over to you very considerable sums of money."

"Of what! of what!" cried she. "Of seductive arts? But, my dear sir, you are a man to be respected, and, moreover, as a lawyer you ought to have some good sense. Look at me. Tell me if I am likely to seduce anyone. I cannot tie my own shoes, nor even stoop. For these twenty years past, the Lord be praised, I have not dared to put on a pair of stays under pain of sudden death. I was as thin as an asparagus stalk when I was seventeen, and pretty too—I may say so now. So I married Jeanrenaud, a good fellow, and headman on the salt-barges. I had my boy, who is a fine young man; he is my pride, and it is not holding myself cheap to say he is my best piece of work. My little Jeanrenaud was a soldier who did Napoleon credit, and who served in the Imperial Guard. But, alas! at the death of my old man, who was drowned, times changed for the worse. I had the smallpox. I was kept two years in my room without stirring, and I came out of it the size you see me, hideous for ever, and as wretched as could be. These are my seductive arts."

"But what, then, can the reasons be that have induced M. d'Espard to give you sums——?"

"Hugious sums, Monsieur, say the word; I do not mind. But as to his reasons, I am not at liberty to explain them."

"You are wrong. At this moment, his family, very naturally alarmed, are about to bring an action——"

"Heaven above us!" said the good woman, starting up. "Is it possible that he should be worried on my account? That king of men, a man that has not his match! Rather than he should have the smallest trouble, or a hair less on his head I could almost say, we would return every sou, Monsieur. Write that down on your papers. Heaven above us! I will go at once and tell Jeanrenaud what is going on! A pretty thing indeed!"

And the little old woman went out, rolled herself downstairs, and disappeared.

"That one tells no lies," said Popinot to himself. "Well, to-morrow I shall know the whole story, for I shall go to see the Marquis d'Espard."

People who have outlived the age

when a man wastes his vitality at random, know how great an influence may be exercised on more important events by apparently trivial incidents, and will not be surprised at the weight here given to the following minor fact. Next day Popinot had an attack of coryza, a complaint which is not dangerous, and generally known by the absurd and inadequate name of a cold in the head.

The judge, who could not suppose that the delay could be serious, feeling himself a little feverish, kept his room, and did not go to see the Marquis d'Espard. This day lost was, to this affair, what on the Day of Dupes the cup of soup had been, taken by Marie de Medici, which, by delaying her meeting with Louis XIII., enabled Richelieu to arrive at Saint-Germain before her, and recapture his royal slave.

Before accompanying the lawyer and his registering clerk to the Marquis d'Espard's house, it may be as well to glance at the home and the private affairs of this father of sons whom his wife's petition represented to be a madman.

Here and there in the old parts of Paris a few buildings may still be seen in which the archæologist can discern an intention of decorating the city, and that love of property which leads the owner to give a durable character to the structure. The house in which M. d'Espard was then living in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte Geneviève, was one of these old mansions, built in stone, and not devoid of a certain richness of style; but time had blackened the stone, and revolutions in the town had damaged it both outside and inside. The dignitaries who formerly dwelt in the neighborhood of the University having disappeared with the great ecclesiastical foundations, this house had become the home of industries and of inhabitants whom it was never destined to shelter. During the last century a printing establishment had worn down the polished floors, soiled the carved wood, blackened the walls, and altered the principal internal arrangements. Formerly the residence of a Cardinal, this fine house was now divided among plebeian tenements. The character of the architecture showed that it had been built under the reigns of Henry III., Henry IV., and Louis XIII., at the time when the hotels Mignon and Serpente were erected in the same neighborhood, with the palace of the Princess Palatine, and the Sorbonne. An old man could remember having heard it called, in the last century, the hotel Duperron, so it seemed probable that the illustrious Cardinal of that name had built, or perhaps merely lived in it.

There still exists, indeed, in the corner of the courtyard, a *perron* or flight of several outer steps by which the house is entered; and the way into the garden on the garden front is down a similar flight of steps. In spite of dilapidations, the luxury lavished by the architect on the balustrade and entrance porch crowning these two *perrons* suggests the simple-minded purpose of commemorating the owner's name, a sort of sculptured pun which our ancestors often allowed themselves. Finally, in support of this evidence, archæologists can still discern in the medallions which show on the principal front some traces of the cords of the Roman hat.

M. le Marquis d'Espard lived on the ground floor, in order, no doubt, to enjoy

the garden, which might be called spacious for that neighborhood, and which lay open to the south, two advantages imperatively necessary for his children's health. The situation of the house, in a street on a steep hill, as its name indicates, secured these ground-floor rooms against ever being damp. M. d'Espard had taken them, no doubt, for a very moderate price, rents being low at the time when he settled in that quarter, in order to be among the schools and to superintend his boys' education. Moreover, the state in which he found the place, with everything to repair, had no doubt induced the owner to be accommodating. Thus M. d'Espard had been able to go to some expense to settle himself suitably without being accused of extravagance. The loftiness of the rooms, the paneling, of which nothing survived but the frames, the decoration of the ceilings, all displayed the dignity which the prelacy stamped on whatever it attempted or created, and which artists discern to this day in the smallest relic that remains, though it be but a book, a dress, the panel of a bookcase, or an armchair.

The Marquis had the rooms painted in the rich brown tones beloved of the Dutch and of the citizens of Old Paris, hues which lend such good effects to the painter of *genre*. The panels were hung with plain paper in harmony with the paint. The window curtains were of inexpensive materials, but chosen so as to produce a generally happy result; the furniture was not too crowded and judiciously placed. Anyone on going into this home could not resist a sense of sweet peacefulness, produced by the perfect calm, the stillness which prevailed, by the unpretentious unity of color, the keeping of the picture, in the words a painter might use. A certain nobleness in the details, the exquisite cleanliness of the furniture, and a perfect concord of men and things, all brought the word "suavity" to the lips.

Few persons were admitted to the rooms used by the Marquis and his two sons, whose life might perhaps seem mysterious to their neighbors. In a wing towards the street, on the third floor, there are three large rooms which had been left in the state of dilapidation and grotesque barrenness to which they had been reduced by the printing works. These three rooms, devoted to the evolution of the *Picturesque History of China*, were contrived to serve as a writing-room, a depository, and a private room, where M. d'Espard sat during part of the day; for after breakfast till four in the afternoon the Marquis remained in this room on the third floor to work at the publication he had undertaken. Visitors wanting to see him commonly found him there, and often the two boys on their return from school resorted thither. Thus the ground-floor rooms were a sort of sanctuary where the father and sons spent their time from the hour of dinner till the next day, and his domestic life was carefully closed against the public eye.

His only servants were a cook—an old woman who had long been attached to his family, and a man-servant forty years old, who was with him when he married Mademoiselle de Blamont. His children's nurse had also remained with them, and the minute care to which the apartment bore witness revealed the sense of order and the maternal affection

expended by this woman in her master's interest, in the management of his house, and the charge of his children. These three good souls, grave and uncommunicative folks, seemed to have entered into the idea which ruled the Marquis's domestic life. And the contrast between their habits and those of most servants was a peculiarity which cast an air of mystery over the house, and fomented the calumny to which M. d'Espard himself lent occasion. Very laudable motives had made him determine never to be on visiting terms with any of the other tenants in the house. In undertaking to educate his boys he wished to keep them from all contact with strangers. Perhaps, too, he wished to avoid the intrusion of neighbors.

In a man of his rank, at a time when the Quartier Latin was distracted by Liberalism, such conduct was sure to rouse in opposition a host of petty passions, of feelings whose folly is only to be measured by their meanness, the outcome of porters' gossip and malevolent tattle from door to door, all unknown to M. d'Espard and his retainers. His man-servant was stigmatized as a Jesuit, his cook as a sly fox; the nurse was in collusion with Madame Jeanrenaud to rob the madman. The madman was the Marquis. By degrees the other tenants came to regard as poofs of madness a number of things they had noticed in M. d'Espard, and passed through the sieve of their judgment without discerning any reasonable motive for them.

Having no belief in the success of the *History of China,* they had managed to convince the landlord of the house that M. d'Espard had no money just at a time when, with the forgetfulness which often befalls busy men, he had allowed the tax-collector to send him a summons for non-payment of arrears. The landlord had forthwith claimed his quarter's rent from January 1st by sending in a receipt, which the porter's wife had amused herself by detaining. On the 15th a summons to pay was served on M. d'Espard, the portress had delivered it at her leisure, and he supposed it to be some misunderstanding, not conceiving of any incivility from a man in whose house he had been living for twelve years. The Marquis was actually seized by a bailiff at the time when his man-servant had gone to carry the money for the rent to the landlord.

This arrest, insidiously reported to the persons with whom he was in treaty for his undertaking, had alarmed some of them who were already doubtful of M. d'Espard's solvency in consequence of the enormous sums which Baron Jeanrenaud and his mother were said to be receiving from him. And, indeed, these suspicions on the part of the tenants, the creditors, and the landlord had some excuse in the Marquis's extreme economy in housekeeping. He conducted it as a ruined man might. His servants always paid in ready money for the most trifling necessaries of life, and acted as not choosing to take credit; if now they had asked for anything on credit, it would probably have been refused, calumnious gossip had been so widely believed in the neighborhood. There are tradesmen who like those of their customers who pay badly when they see them often, while they hate others, and very good ones, who hold themselves on too high a level to allow of any familiarity as *chums,* a vulgar but expressive

word. Men are made so; in almost every class they will allow to a gossip, or a vulgar soul that flatters them, facilities and favors they refuse to the superiority they resent, in whatever form it may show itself. The shopkeeper who rails at the Court has his courtiers.

In short, the manners of the Marquis and his children were certain to arouse ill-feeling in their neighbors, and to work them up by degrees to the pitch of malevolence when men do not hesitate at an act of meanness if only it may damage the adversary they have themselves created.

M. d'Espard was a gentleman, as his wife was a lady, by birth and breeding; noble types, already so rare in France that the observer can easily count the persons who perfectly realize them. These two characters are based on primitive ideas, on beliefs that may be called innate, on habits formed in infancy, and which have ceased to exist. To believe in pure blood, in a privileged race, to stand in thought above other men, must we not from birth have measured the distance which divides patricians from the mob? To command, must we not have never met our equal? And finally, must not education inculcate the ideas with which Nature inspires those great men on whose brow she has placed a crown before their mother has ever set a kiss there? These ideas, this education, are no longer possible in France, where for forty years past chance has arrogated the right of making noblemen by dipping them in the blood of battles, by gilding them with glory, by crowning them with the halo of genius; where the abolition of entail and of eldest sonship, by frittering away estates, compels the nobleman to attend to his own business instead of attending to affairs of state, and where personal greatness can only be such greatness as is acquired by long and patient toil: quite a new era.

Regarded as a relic of that great institution known as feudalism, M. d'Espard deserved respectful admiration. If he believed himself to be by blood the superior of other men, he also believed in all the obligations of nobility; he had the virtues and the strength it demands. He had brought up his children in his own principles, and taught them from the crade the religion of their caste. A deep sense of their own dignity, pride of name, the conviction that they were by birth great, gave rise in them to a kingly pride, the courage of knights, and the protecting kindness of a baronial lord; their manners, harmonizing with their notions, would have become princes, and offended all the world of the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte Geneviève—a world, above all others, of equality, where everyone believed that M. d'Espard was ruined, and where all, from the lowest to the highest, refused the privileges of nobility to a nobleman without money, because they all were ready to allow an enriched bourgeois to usurp them. Thus the lack of communion between this family and other persons was as much moral as it was physical.

In the father and the children alike, their personality harmonized with the spirit within. M. d'Espard, at this time about fifty, might have sat as a model to represent the aristocracy of birth in the nineteenth century. He was slight and fair; there was in the outline and

general expression of his face a native distinction which spoke of lofty sentiments, but it bore the impress of a deliberate coldness which commanded respect a little too decidedly. His aquiline nose bent at the tip from left to right, a slight crookedness which was not devoid of grace; his blue eyes, his high forehead, prominent enough at the brows to form a thick ridge that checked the light and shaded his eyes, all indicated a spirit of rectitude, capable of perseverance and perfect loyalty, while it gave a singular look to his countenance. This pent-house forehead might, in fact, hint at a touch of madness, and his thick-knitted eyebrows added to the apparent eccentricity. He had the white well-kept hands of a gentleman; his foot was high and narrow. His hesitating speech—not merely as to his pronunciation, which was that of a stammerer, but also in the expression of his ideas, his thought, and language—produced on the mind of the hearer the impression of a man who, in familiar phraseology, comes and goes, feels his way, tries everything, breaks off his gestures, and finishes nothing. This defect was purely superficial, and in contrast with the decisiveness of a firmly-set mouth, and the strongly-marked character of his physiognomy. His rather jerky gait matched his mode of speech. These peculiarities helped to affirm his supposed insanity. In spite of his elegant appearance, he was systematically parsimonious in his personal expenses, and wore the same black frock-coat for three or four years, brushed with extreme care by his old man-servant.

As to the children, they both were handsome, and endowed with a grace which did not exclude an expression of aristocratic disdain. They had the bright coloring, the clear eye, the transparent flesh which reveal habits of purity, regularity of life, and a due proportion of work and play. They both had black hair and blue eyes, and a twist in their nose, like their father; but their mother, perhaps, had transmitted to them the dignity of speech, of look and mien, which are hereditary in the Blamont-Chauvrys. Their voices, as clear as crystal, had an emotional quality, the softness which proves so seductive; they had, in short, the voice a woman would willingly listen to after feeling the flame of their looks. But, above all, they had the modesty of pride, a chaste reserve, a *touch-me-not* which at a maturer age might have seemed intentional coyness, so much did their demeanor inspire a wish to know them. The elder, Comte Clément de Nègrepelisse, was close upon his sixteenth year. For the last two years he had ceased to wear the pretty English round jacket which his brother, Vicomte Camille d'Espard, still wore. The Count, who for the last six months went no more to the Collège Henri IV., was dressed in the style of a young man enjoying his first pleasures of fashion. His father had not wished to condemn him to a year's useless study of philosophy; he was trying to give his knowledge some consistency by the study of transcendental mathematics. At the same time, the Marquis was having him taught Eastern languages, the international law of Europe, heraldry, and history from the original sources—charters, early documents, and collections of edicts. Camille had lately begun to study rhetoric.

The day when Popinot arranged to go to question M. d'Espard was a Thursday, a holiday. At about nine in the morning, before their father was awake, the brothers were playing in the garden. Clément was finding it hard to refuse his brother, who was anxious to go to the shooting gallery for the first time, and who begged him to second his request to the Marquis. The Viscount always rather took advantage of his weakness, and was very fond of wrestling with his brother. So the couple were quarreling and fighting in play like schoolboys. As they ran in the garden, chasing each other, they made so much noise as to wake their father, who came to the window without their perceiving him in the heat of the fray. The Marquis amused himself with watching his two children twisted together like snakes, their faces flushed by the exertion of their strength; their complexion was rose and white, their eyes flashed sparks, their limbs writhed like cords in the fire; they fell, sprang up again, and caught each other like athletes in a circus, affording their father one of those moments of happiness which would make amends for the keenest anxieties of a busy life. Two other persons, one on the second and one on the first floor, were also looking into the garden, and saying that the old madman was amusing himself by making his children fight. Immediately a number of heads appeared at the windows; the Marquis, noticing them, called a word to his sons, who at once climbed up to the window and jumped into his room, and Clément obtained the permission asked by Camille.

All through the house everyone was talking of the Marquis's new form of insanity. When Popinot arrived at about twelve o'clock, accompanied by his clerk, the portress, when he asked for M. d'Espard, conducted him to the third floor, telling him "as how M. d'Espard, no longer ago than that very morning, had set on his two children to fight, and laughed like the monster he was on seeing the younger biting the elder till he bled, and as how no doubt he longed to see them kill each other.—Don't ask me the reason why," she added; "he doesn't know himself!"

Just as the woman spoke these decisive words, she had brought the judge to the landing on the third floor, face to face with a door covered with notices announcing the successive numbers of the *Picturesque History of China.* The muddy floor, the dirty banisters, the door where the printers had left their marks, the dilapidated window, and the ceiling on which the apprentices had amused themselves with drawing monstrosities with the smoky flare of their tallow dips, the piles of paper and litter heaped up in the corners, intentionally or from sheer neglect—in short, every detail of the picture lying before his eyes agreed so well with the facts alleged by the Marquise that the judge, in spite of his impartiality, could not help believing them.

"There you are, gentlemen," said the porter's wife; "there is the manifactor, where the Chinese swallow up enough to feed the whole neighborhood."

The clerk looked at the judge with a smile, and Popinot found it hard to keep his countenance. They went together into the outer room, where sat an old man, who, no doubt, performed the functions of office clerk, shopman, and cashier. This old man was the Maître

Jacques of China. Along the walls ran long shelves, on which the published numbers lay in piles. A partition in wood, with a grating lined with green curtains, cut off the end of the room, forming a private office. A till with a slit to admit or disgorge crown pieces indicated the cash-desk.

"M. d'Espard?" said Popinot, addressing the man, who wore a gray blouse.

The shopman opened the door into the next room, where the lawyer and his companion saw a venerable old man, white-headed and simply dressed, wearing the Cross of Saint-Louis, seated at a desk. He ceased comparing some sheets of colored prints to look up at the two visitors. This room was an unpretentious office, full of books and proof-sheets. There was a black wood table at which someone, at the moment absent, no doubt was accustomed to work.

"The Marquis d'Espard?" said Popinot.

"No, Monsieur," said the old man, rising; "what do you want with him?" he added, coming forward, and showing by his demeanor the dignified manners and habits due to a gentlemanly education.

"We wish to speak to him on business exclusively personal to himself," replied Popinot.

"D'Espard, here are some gentlemen who want to see you," then said the old man, going into the furthest room, where the Marquis was sitting by the fire, reading the newspaper.

This innermost room had a shabby carpet, the windows were hung with gray holland curtains; the furniture consisted of a few mahogany chairs, two armchairs, a desk with a revolving front, an ordinary office table, and, on the chimney-shelf, a dingy clock and two old candlesticks. The old man led the way for Popinot and his registrar, and pulled forward two chairs, as though he were master of the place; M. d'Espard left it to him. After the preliminary civilities, during which the judge watched the supposed lunatic, the Marquis naturally asked what was the object of this visit. On this Popinot glanced significantly at the old gentleman and the Marquis.

"I believe, Monsieur le Marquis," said he, "that the character of my functions, and the inquiry that has brought me here, make it desirable that we should be alone, though it is understood by law that in such cases the inquiries have a sort of family publicity. I am judge on the Inferior Court of Appeal for the Department of the Seine, and charged by the President with the duty of examining you as to certain facts set forth in a petition for a Commission in Lunacy on the part of the Marquise d'Espard."

The old man withdrew. When the lawyer and the Marquis were alone, the clerk shut the door, and seated himself unceremoniously at the office table, where he laid out his papers and prepared to take down his notes. Popinot had still kept his eye on M. d'Espard; he was watching the effect on him of this crude statement, so painful for a man in full possession of his reason. The Marquise d'Espard, whose face was usually pale, as are those of fair men, suddenly turned scarlet with anger; he trembled for an instant, sat down, laid his paper on the chimney-piece, and looked down. In a moment he had recovered his gentlemanly dignity, and

looked steadily at the judge, as if to read in his countenance the indications of his character.

"How is it, Monsieur," he asked, "that I have had no notice of such a petition?"

"Monsieur le Marquis, persons on whom such a commission is held, not being supposed to have the use of their reason, any notice of the petition is unnecessary. The duty of the Court chiefly consists in verifying the allegations of the petitioner."

"Nothing can be fairer," replied the Marquis. "Well, then, Monsieur, be so good as to tell me what I ought to do——"

"You have only to answer my questions, omitting nothing. However delicate the reasons may be which may have led you to act in such a manner as to give Madame d'Espard a pretext for her petition, speak without fear. It is unnecessary to assure you that lawyers know their duties, and that in such cases the profoundest secrecy——"

"Monsieur," said the Marquis, whose face expressed the sincerest pain, "if my explanations should lead to any blame being attached to Madame d'Espard's conduct, what will be the result?"

"The Court may add its censure to its reasons for its decision."

"Is such censure optional? If I were to stipulate with you, before replying, that nothing should be said that could annoy Madame d'Espard in the event of your report being in my favor, would the Court take my request into consideration?"

The judge looked at the Marquis, and the two men exchanged sentiments of equal magnanimity.

"Noël," said Popinot to his registrar, "go into the other room. If you can be of use, I will call you in.—If, as I am inclined to think," he went on, speaking to the Marquis when the clerk had gone out, "I find that there is some misunderstanding in this case, I can promise you, Monsieur, that on your application the Court will act with due courtesy.

"There is a leading fact put forward by Madame d'Espard, the most serious of all, of which I must beg for an explanation," said the judge after a pause. "It refers to the dissipation of your fortune to the advantage of a certain Madame Jeanrenaud, the widow of a barge-master—or rather, to that of her son, Colonel Jeanrenaud, for whom you are said to have procured an appointment, to have exhausted your influence with the King, and at last to have extended such protection as secures him a good marriage. The petition suggests that such a friendship is more devoted than any feelings, even those which morality must disapprove——"

A sudden flush crimsoned the Marquis's face and forehead, tears even started to his eyes, for his eyelashes were wet, then wholesome pride crushed the emotions, which in a man are accounted a weakness.

"To tell you the truth, Monsieur," said the Marquis, in a broken voice, "you place me in a strange dilemma. The motives of my conduct were to have died with me. To reveal them I must disclose to you some secret wounds, must place the honor of my family in your keeping, and must speak of myself, a delicate matter, as you will fully understand. I hope, Monsieur, that it will all remain a secret between us. You will, no doubt, be able to find in the

formulas of the law one which will allow of judgment being pronounced without any betrayal of my confidences."

"So far as that goes, it is perfectly possible, Monsieur le Marquis."

"Some time after my marriage," said M. d'Espard, "my wife having run into considerable expenses, I was obliged to have recourse to borrowing. You know what was the position of noble families during the Revolution; I had not been able to keep a steward or a man of business. Nowadays gentlemen are for the most part obliged to manage their affairs themselves. Most of my title-deeds had been brought to Paris, from Languedoc, Provence, or Le Comtat, by my father, who dreaded, and not without reason, the inquisition which family title-deeds, and what were then styled the 'parchments' of the privileged class, brought down on the owners.

"Our name is Nègrepelisse; d'Espard is a title acquired in the time of Henry IV. by a marriage which brought us the estates and titles of the house of d'Espard, on condition of our bearing an escutcheon of pretense on our coat-of-arms, those of the house of d'Espard, an old family of Béarn, connected in the female line with that of Albret: quarterly, paly of or and sable; and azure two griffins' claws armed, gules in saltire, with the famous motto *Des partem leonis*. At the time of this allience we lost Nègrepelisse, a little town which was as famous during the religious struggles as was my ancestor who then bore the name. Captain de Nègrepelisse was ruined by the burning of all his property, for the Protestants did not spare a friend of Montluc's.

"The Crown was unjust to M. de Nègrepelisse; he received neither a marshal's baton, nor a post as governor, nor any indemnity; King Charles IX., who was fond of him, died without being able to reward him; Henri IV. arranged his marriage with Mademoiselle d'Espard, and secured him the estates of that house, but all those of the Nègrepelisses had already passed into the hands of his creditors.

"My great-grandfather, the Marquis d'Espard, was, like me, placed early in life at the head of his family by the death of his father, who, after dissipating his wife's fortune, left his son nothing but the entailed estates of the d'Espards, burdened with a jointure. The young Marquis was all the more straitened for money because he held a post at Court. Being in great favor with Louis XIV., the King's goodwill brought him a fortune. But here, Monsieur, a blot stained our escutcheon, an unconfessed and horrible stain of blood and disgrace which I am making it my business to wipe out. I discovered the secret among the deeds relating to the estate of Nègrepelisse and the packets of letters."

At this solemn moment the Marquis spoke without hesitation or any of the repetition habitual with him; but it is a matter of common observation that persons who, in ordinary life, are afflicted with these two defects, are freed from them as soon as any passionate emotion underlies their speech.

"The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was decreed," he went on. "You are no doubt aware, Monsieur, that this was an opportunity for many favorites to make their fortunes. Louis XIV. bestowed on the magnates about his Court the confiscated lands of those Protestant

families who did not take the prescribed steps for the sale of their property. Some persons in high favor went 'Protestant-hunting,' as the phrase was. I have ascertained beyond a doubt that the fortune enjoyed to this day by two ducal families is derived from lands seized from hapless merchants.

"I will not attempt to explain to you, a man of law, all the maneuvers employed to entrap the refugees who had large fortunes to carry away. It is enough to say that the lands of Nègrepelisse, comprising twenty-two churches and rights over the town, and those of Gravenges which had formerly belonged to us, were at that time in the hands of a Protestant family. My grandfather recovered them by gifts from Louis XIV. This gift was effected by documents hall-marked by atrocious iniquity. The owner of these two estates, thinking he would be able to return, had gone through the form of a sale, and was going to Switzerland to join his family, whom he had sent in advance. He wished, no doubt, to take advantage of every delay granted by the law, so as to settle the concerns of his business.

"This man was arrested by order of the governor, the trustee confessed the truth, the poor merchant was hanged, and my ancestor had the two estates. I would gladly have been able to ignore the share he took in the plot; but the governor was his uncle on the mother's side; and I have unfortunately read the letter in which he begged him to apply to Deodatus, the name agreed upon by the Court to designate the King. In this letter there is a tone of jocosity with reference to the victim, which filled me with horror. In the end, the sums of money sent by the refugee family to ransom the poor man's life were kept by the governor, who dispatched the merchant all the same."

The Marquis paused, as though the memory of it were still too heavy for him to bear.

"This unfortunate family were named Jeanrenaud," he went on. "That name is enough to account for my conduct. I could never think without keen pain of the secret disgrace that weighed on my family. That fortune enabled my grandfather to marry a demoiselle de Navarreins-Lansac, heiress to the younger branch of that house, who were at that time much richer than the elder branch of the Navarreins. My father thus became one of the largest landowners in the kingdom. He was able to marry my mother, a Grandlieu of the younger branch. Though ill-gotten, this property has been singularly profitable.

"For my part, being determined to remedy the mischief, I wrote to Switzerland, and knew no peace till I was on the traces of the Protestant victim's heirs. At last I discovered that the Jeanrenauds, reduced to abject want, had left Fribourg and returned to live in France. Finally, I found in M. Jeanrenaud, lieutenant in a cavalry regiment under Napoleon, the sole heir of this unhappy family. In my eyes, Monsieur, the rights of the Jeanrenauds were clear To establish a prescriptive right is it not necessary that there should have been some possibility of proceeding against those who are in the enjoyment of it? To whom could these refugees have appealed? Their Court of Justice was on high, or rather, Monsieur, it was here," and the Marquis struck his hand on his

heart. "I did not choose that my children should be able to think of me as I have thought of my father and of my ancestors. I aim at leaving them an unblemished inheritance and escutcheon. I did not choose that nobility should be a lie in my person. And, after all, politically speaking, ought those *émigrés* who are now appealing against revolutionary confiscations, to keep the property derived from antecedent confiscations by positive crimes?

"I found in M. Jeanrenaud and his mother the most perverse honesty; to hear them you would suppose that they were robbing me. In spite of all I could say, they will accept no more than the value of the lands at the time when the King bestowed them on my family. The price was settled between us at the sum of eleven hundred thousand francs, which I was to pay at my convenience and without interest. To achieve this I had to forego my income for a long time. And then, Monsieur, began the destruction of some illusions I had allowed myself as to Madame d'Espard's character. When I proposed to her that we should leave Paris and go into the country, where we could live respected on half of her income, and so more rapidly complete a restitution of which I spoke to her without going into the more serious details, Madame d'Espard treated me as a madman. I then understood my wife's real character. She would have approved of my grandfather's conduct without a scruple, and have laughed at the Huguenots. Terrified by her coldness, and her little affection for her children, whom she abandoned to me without a regret, I determined to leave her the command of her fortune, after paying our common debts. It was no business of hers, as she told me, to pay for my follies. As I then had not enough to live on and pay for my sons' education, I determined to educate them myself, to make them gentlemen nad men of feeling. By investing my money in the Funds I have been enabled to pay off my obligation sooner than I had dared to hope, for I took advantage of the opportunities afforded by the improvement in prices. If I had kept four thousand francs a year for my boys and myself, I could only have paid off twenty thousand crowns a year, and it would have taken almost eighteen years to achieve my freedom. As it is, I have lately repaid the whole of the eleven hundred thousand francs that were due. Thus I enjoy the happiness of having made this restitution without doing my children the smallest wrong.

"These, Monsieur, are the reasons for the payments made to Madame Jeanrenaud and her son."

"So Madame d'Espard knew the motives of your retirement?" said the judge, controlling the emotion he felt at this narrative.

"Yes, Monsieur."

Popinot gave an expressive shrug; he rose and opened the door in the next room.

"Noël, you can go," said he to his clerk.

"Monsieur," he went on, "though what you have told me is enough to enlighten me thoroughly, I should like to hear what you have to say to the other facts put forward in the petition. For instance, you are here carrying on a business such as is not habitually undertaken by a man of rank."

"We cannot discuss that matter here,"

said the Marquis, signing to the judge to quit the room. "Nouvion," said he to the old man, "I am going down to my rooms; the children will soon be in; dine with us."

"Then, Monsieur le Marquis," said Popinot on the stairs, "that is not your apartment?"

"No, Monsieur; I took those rooms for the office of this undertaking. You see," and he pointed to an advertisement sheet, "the *History* is being brought out by one of the most respectable firms in Paris, and not by me."

The marquis showed the lawyer into the ground-floor rooms, saying, "This is my apartment."

Popinot was quite touched by the poetry, not aimed at but pervading this dwelling. The weather was lovely, the windows were open, the air from the garden brought in a wholesome earthy smell, the sunshine brightened and gilded the woodwork, of a rather gloomy brown. At the sight Popinot made up his mind that a madman would hardly be capable of inventing the tender harmony of which he was at that moment conscious.

"I should like just such an apartment," thought he. "You think of leaving this part of the town?" he inquired.

"I hope so," replied the Marquis. "But I shall remain till my younger son has finished his studies, and till the children's character is thoroughly formed, before introducing them to the world and to their mother's circle. Indeed, after giving them the solid information they possess, I intend to complete it by taking them to travel to the capitals of Europe, that they may see men and things, and become accustomed to speak the languages they have learned. And, Monsieur," he went on, giving the judge a chair in the drawing-room, "I could not discuss the book on China with you, in the presence of an old friend of my family, the Comte de Nouvion, who, having emigrated, has returned to France without any fortune whatever, and who is my partner in this concern, less for my profit than his. Without telling him what my motives were, I explained to him that I was as poor as he, but that I had enough money to start a speculation in which he might be usefully employed. My tutor was the Abbé Grozier, whom Charles X. on my recommendation appointed Keeper of the Books at the Arsenal, which were returned to that Prince when he was still Monsieur. The Abbé Grozier was deeply learned with regard to China, its manners and customs; he made me heir to this knowledge at an age when it is difficult not to become a fanatic for the things we learn. At five-and-twenty I knew Chinese, and I confess I have never been able to check myself in an exclusive admiration for that nation, who conquered their conquerors, whose annals extend back indisputably to a period more remote than mythological or Biblical times, who by their immutable institutions have preserved the integrity of their empire, whose monuments are gigantic, whose administration is perfect, among whom revolutions are impossible, who have regarded ideal beauty as a barren element in art, who have luxury and industry to such a pitch that we cannot outdo them in anything, while they are our equals in things where we believe ourselves superior.

"Still, Monsieur, though I often make a jest of comparing China with the present condition of European states, I am not a Chinaman, I am a French gentleman. If you entertain any doubts as to the financial side of this undertaking, I can prove to you that at this moment we have two thousand five hundred subscribers to this work, which is literary, iconographical, statistical, and religious; its importance has been generally appreciated; our subscribers belong to every nation in Europe, we have but twelve hundred in France. Our book will cost about three hundred francs, and the Comte de Nouvion will derive from it from six to seven thousand francs a year, for his comfort was the real motive of the undertaking. For my part, I aimed only at the possibility of affording my children some pleasures. The hundred thousand francs I have made, quite in spite of myself, will pay for their fencing lessons, horses, dress, and theatres, pay the masters who teach them accomplishments, procure them canvases to spoil, the books they may wish to buy, in short, all the little fancies which a father finds so much pleasure in gratifying. If I had been compelled to refuse these indulgences to my poor boys, who are so good and work so hard, the sacrifice I made to the honor of my name would have been doubly painful.

"In point of fact, the twelve years I have spent in retirement from the world to educate my children have led to my being completely forgotten at Court. I have given up the career of politics; I have lost my historical fortune, and all the distinctions which I might have acquired and bequeathed to my children; but our house will have lost nothing; my boys will be men of mark. Though I have missed the senatorship, they will win it nobly by devoting themselves to the affairs of the country, and doing such service as is not soon forgotten. While purifying the past record of my family, I have insured it a glorious future; and is not that to have achieved a noble task, though in secret and without glory?—And now, Monsieur, have you any other explanations to ask of me?"

At this instant the tramp of horses was heard in the courtyard.

"Here they are!" said the Marquis. In a moment the two lads, fashionably put plainly dressed, came into the room, booted, spurred, and gloved, and flourishing their riding-whips. Their beaming faces brought in the freshness of the outer air; they were brilliant with health. They both grasped their father's hand, giving him a look, as friends do, a glance of unspoken affection, and then they bowed coldly to the lawyer. Popinot felt that it was quite unnecessary to question the Marquis as to his relations towards his sons.

"Have you enjoyed yourselves?" asked the Marquis.

"Yes, father; I knocked down six dolls in twelve shots at the first trial!" cried Camille.

"And where did you ride?"

"In the Bois; we saw my mother."

"Did she stop?"

"We were riding so fast just then that I dare say she did not see us," replied the young Count.

"But, then, why did you not go to speak to her?"

"I fancy I have noticed, father, that

she does not care that we should speak to her in public," said Clément, in an undertone. "We are a little too big."

The judge's hearing was keen enough to catch these words, which brought a cloud to the Marquis's brow. Popinot took pleasure in contemplating the picture of the father and his boys. His eyes went back with a sense of pathos to M. d'Espard's face; his features, his expression, and his manner all expressed honesty in its noblest aspect, intellectual and chivalrous honesty, nobility in all its beauty.

"You—you see, Monsieur," said the Marquis, and his hesitation had returned, "you see that Justice may look in—in here at any time—yes, at any time—here. If there is anybody crazy, it can only be the children—the children—who are a little crazy about their father, and the father who is very crazy about his children—but that sort of madness rings true."

At this juncture Madame Jeanrenaud's voice was heard in the anteroom, and the good woman came bustling in, in spite of the man-servant's remonstrances.

"I take no roundabout ways, I can tell you!" she exclaimed. "Yes, Monsieur le Marquis, I want to speak to you, this very minute," she went on, with a comprehensive bow to the company. "By George, and I am too late as it is, since Monsieur the criminal Judge is before me."

"Criminal!" cried the two boys.

"Good reason why I did not find you at your own house, since you were here. Well, well! the Law is always to the fore when there is mischief brewing.—I came, Monsieur le Marquis, to tell you that my son and I are of one mind to give you everything back, since our honor is threatened. My son and I, we had rather give you back everything than cause you the smallest trouble. My word, they must be as stupid as pans without handles to call you a lunatic——"

"A lunatic! My father?" exclaimed the boys, clinging to the Marquis. "What is this?"

"Silence, Madame," said Popinot.

"Children, leave us," said the Marquis.

The two boys went into the garden without a word, but very much alarmed.

"Madame," said the judge, "the moneys paid to you by Monsieur le Marquis were legally due, though given to you in virtue of a very far-reaching theory of honesty. If all the people possessed of confiscated goods, by whatever cause, even if acquired by treachery, were compelled to make restitution every hundred and fifty years, there would be few legitimate owners in France. The possessions of Jacques Cœur enriched twenty noble families; the confiscations pronounced by the English to the advantage of their adherents at the time when they held a part of France made the fortune of several princely houses.

"Our law allows M. d'Espard to dispose of his income without accounting for it, or suffering him to be accused of its misapplication. A Commission in Lunacy can only be granted when a man's actions are devoid of reason; but in this case, the remittances made to you have a reason based on the most sacred and most honorable motives. Hence you may keep it all without remorse, and leave the world to misinterpret a noble action. In Paris, the highest virtue is the object of the foul-

est calumny. It is, unfortunately, the present condition of society that makes the Marquis's actions sublime. For the honor of my country, I would that such deeds were regarded as a matter of course; but, as things are, I am forced by comparison to look upon M. d'Espard as a man to whom a crown should be awarded, rather than that he should be threatened with a Commsision in Lunacy.

"In the course of a long professional career, I have seen and heard nothing which has touched me more deeply than that I have just seen and heard. But it is not extraordinary that virtue should wear its noblest aspect when it is practiced by men of the highest class.

"Having heard me express myself in this way, I hope, Monsieur le Marquis, that you feel certain of my silence, and that you will not for a moment be uneasy as to the decision pronounced in the case—if it comes before the Court."

"There, now! Well said," cried Madame Jeanrenaud. "That is something like a judge! Look here, my dear sir, I would hug you if I were not so ugly; you speak like a book."

The Marquis held out his hand to Popinot, who gently pressed it with a look full of sympathetic comprehension at this great man in private life, and the Marquis responded with a pleasant smile. These two natures, both so large and full—one commonplace but divinely kind, the other lofty and sublime—had fallen into unison gently, without a jar, without a flash of passion, as though two pure lights had been merged into one. The father of a whole district felt himself worthy to grasp the hand of this man who was doubly noble, and the Marquis felt in the depths of his soul an instinct that told him that the judge's hand was one of those from which the treasures of inexhaustible beneficence perennially flow.

"Monsieur le Marquis," added Popinot, with a bow, "I am happy to be able to tell you that, from the first words of this inquiry, I regarded my clerk as quite unnecessary."

He went close to M. d'Espard, led him into the window-bay, and said: "It is time that you should return home, Monsieur. I believe that Madame la Marquise has acted in this matter under an influence which you ought at once to counteract."

Popinot withdrew; he looked back several times as he crossed the courtyard, touched by the recollection of the scene. It was one of those which take root in the memory to blossom again in certain hours when the soul seeks consolation.

"Those rooms would just suit me," said he to himself as he reached home. "If M. d'Espard leaves them, I will take up his lease."

The next day, at about ten in the morning, Popinot, who had written out his report the previous evening, made his way to the Palais de Justice, intending to have prompt and righteous justice done. As he went into the robing-room to put on his gown and bands, the usher told him that the President of his Court begged him to attend in his private room, where he was waiting for him. Popinot forthwith obeyed.

"Good-morning, my dear Popinot," said the President, "I have been waiting for you."

"Why, Monsieur le Président, is anything wrong?"

"A mere silly trifle," said the President. "The Keeper of the Seals, with whom I had the honor of dining yesterday, led me apart into a corner. He had heard that you had been to tea with Madame d'Espard, in whose case you were employed to make inquiries. He gave me to understand that it would be as well that you should not sit on this case——"

"But, Monsieur le Président, I can prove that I left Madame d'Espard's house at the moment when tea was brought in. And my conscience——"

"Yes, yes; the whole Bench, the two Courts, all the profession know you. I need not repeat what I said about you to his Eminence; but, you know, 'Cæsar's wife must not be suspected.' So we shall not make this foolish trifle a matter of discipline, but only of the properties. Between ourselves, it is not on your account, but on that of the Bench."

"But, Monsieur, if you only knew the kind of woman——" said the judge, trying to pull his report out of his pocket.

"I am perfectly certain that you have proceeded in this matter with the strictest independence of judgment. I myself, in the provinces, have often taken more than a cup of tea with the people I had to try; but the fact that the Keeper of the Seals should have mentioned it and that you might be talked about, is enough to make the Court avoid any discussion of the matter. Any conflict with public opinion must always be dangerous for a constitutional body, even when the right is on its side against the public, because their weapons are not equal. Journalism may say or suppose anything, and our dignity forbids us even to reply. In fact, I have spoken of the matter to your President, and M. Camusot has been appointed in your place on your retirement, which you will signify. It is a family matter, so to speak. And I now beg you to signify your retirement from the case as a personal favor. To make up, you will get the Cross of the Legion of Honor, which has so long been due to you. I make that my business."

When he saw M. Camusot, a judge recently called to Paris from a provincial Court of the same class, as he went forward bowing to the Judge and the President, Popinot could not suppress an ironical smile. This pale, fair young man, full of covert ambition, looked ready to hang and unhang, at the pleasure of any earthly king, the innocent and the guilty alike, and to follow the example of a Laubardemont rather than that of a Molé.

Popinot withdrew with a bow; he scorned to deny the lying accusation that had been brought against him.

Colonel Chabert

To Madame la Comtesse Ida de Bacarmé
née *du Chasteler*

"Hullo! There is that old Box-coat again!"

This exclamation was made by a lawyer's clerk of the class called in French offices a gutter-jumper—a messenger in fact—who at this moment was eating a piece of dry bread with a hearty appetite. He pulled off a morsel of crumb to make into a bullet, and fired it gleefully through the open pane of the window against which he was leaning. The pellet, well aimed, rebounded almost as high as the window, after hitting the hat of a stranger who was crossing the courtyard of a house in the Rue Vivienne, where dwelt Maître Derville, attorney-at-law.

"Come, Simonnin, don't play tricks on people, or I will turn you out of doors. However poor a client may be, he is still a man, hang it all!" said the head clerk, pausing in the addition of a bill of costs.

The lawyer's messenger is commonly, as was Simonnin, a lad of thirteen or fourteen, who, in every office, is under the special jurisdiction of the managing clerk, whose errands and *billets-doux* keep him employed on his way to carry writs to the bailiff's and petitions to the Courts. He is akin to the street boy in his habits, and to the pettifogger by fate. The boy is almost always ruthless, unbroken, unmanageable, a ribald rhymester, impudent, greedy, and idle. And yet, almost all these clerklings have an old mother lodging on some fifth floor with whom they share their pittance of thirty or forty francs a month.

"If he is a man, why do you call him old Box-coat?" asked Simonnin, with the air of a schoolboy who has caught out his master.

And he went on eating his bread and cheese, leaning his shoulder against the window jamb; for he rested standing like a cab-horse, one of his legs raised and propped against the other, on the toe of his shoe.

"What trick can we play that cove?" said the third clerk, whose name was Godeschal, in a low voice, pausing in the middle of a discourse he was extemporizing in an appeal engrossed by the fourth clerk, of which copies were being made by two neophytes from the provinces.

Then he went on improvising—

"*But, in his noble and beneficent wisdom, his Majesty, Louis the Eighteenth* —(write it at full length, heh! Desroches the learned—you, as you engross it!)—*when he resumed the reins of Government, understood*— (what did that old nincompoop ever understand?) —*the high mission to which he had been called by Divine Providence!*—(a note of admiration and six stops. They are pious enough at the Courts to let us put six)—*and his first thought, as is proved by the date of the order hereinafter designated, was to repair the misfortunes caused by the terrible and sad disasters of the revolutionary times, by restoring to his numerous and faithful adherents*—("numerous" is flattering, and ought to please the Bench)—*all their unsold estates, whether within our*

realm, or in conquered or acquired territory, or in the endowments of public institutions, for we are, and proclaim ourselves competent to declare, that this is the spirit and meaning of the famous, truly loyal order given in—Stop," said Godeschal to the three copying clerks, "that rascally sentence brings me to the end of my page.—Well," he went on, wetting the back fold of the sheet with his tongue, so as to be able to fold back the page of thick stamped paper, "well, if you want to play him a trick, tell him that the master can only see his clients between two and three in the morning; we shall see if he comes, the old ruffian!"

And Godeschal took up the sentence he was dictating—"*given in*—Are you ready?"

"Yes," cried the three writers.

It all went on together, the appeal, the gossip, and the conspiracy.

"*Given in*—Here, Daddy Boucard, what is the date of the order? We must dot our *i*'s and cross our *t*'s, by Jingo! It helps to fill the pages."

"By Jingo!" repeated one of the copying clerks before Boucard, the head clerk, could reply.

"What! have you written *by Jingo?*" cried Godeschal, looking at one of the novices, with an expression at once stern and humorous.

"Why yes," said Desroches, the fourth clerk, leaning across his neighbor's copy, "he has written *'We must dot our i's'* and spelt it *by Gingo!*"

All the clerks shouted with laughter.

"Why! Monsieur Huré, you take 'By Jingo' for a law term, and you say you come from Mortagne!" exclaimed Simonnin.

"Scratch it cleanly out," said the head clerk. "If the judge, whose business it is to tax the bill, were to see such things, he would say you were laughing at the whole boiling. You would hear of it from the chief! Come, no more of this nonsense, Monsieur Huré! A Norman ought not to write out an appeal without thought. It is the 'Shoulder arms!' of the law."

"*Given in—in?*" asked Godeschal.—"Tell me when, Boucard."

"June 1814," replied the head clerk, without looking up from his work.

A knock at the office door interrupted the circumlocutions of the prolix document. Five clerks with rows of hungry teeth, bright, mocking eyes, and curly heads, lifted their noses towards the door, after crying all together in a singing tone, "Come in!"

Boucard kept his face buried in a pile of papers—*broutilles* (odds and ends) in French law jargon—and went on drawing out the bill of costs on which he was busy.

The office was a large room furnished with the traditional stool which is to be seen in all these dens of law-quibbling. The stove pipe crossed the room diagonally to the chimney of a bricked-up fireplace; on the marble chimney-piece were several chunks of bread, triangles of Brie cheese, pork cutlets, glasses, bottles, and the head clerk's cup of chocolate. The smell of these dainties blended so completely with that of the immoderately overheated stove and the odor peculiar to offices and old papers, that the trail of a fox would not have been perceptible. The floor was covered with mud and snow, brought in by the clerks. Near the window stood the desk

with a revolving lid, where the head clerk worked, and against the back of it was the second clerk's table. The second clerk was at this moment in Court. It was between eight and nine in the morning.

The only decoration of the office consisted in huge yellow posters, announcing seizures of real estate, sales, settlements under trust, final or interim judgments,—all the glory of a lawyer's office. Behind the head clerk was an enormous stack of pigeon-holes from the top to the bottom of the room, of which each division was crammed with bundles of papers with an infinite number of tickets hanging from them at the ends of red tape, which give a peculiar physiognomy to law-papers. The lower rows were filled with cardboard boxes, yellow with use, on which might be read the names of the more important clients whose cases were juicily stewing at this present time. The dirty window-panes admitted but little daylight. Indeed, there are very few offices in Paris where it is possible to write without lamplight before ten in the morning in the month of February, for they are all left to very natural neglect; everyone comes and no one stays; no one has any personal interest in a scene of mere routine—neither the attorney, nor the counsel, nor the clerks, trouble themselves about the appearance of a place which, to the youths, is a schoolroom; to the clients, a passage; to the chief, a laboratory. The greasy furniture is handed down to successive owners with such scrupulous care, that in some offices may still be seen boxes of *remainders,* machines for twisting parchment gut, and bags left by the prosecuting parties of the Châtelet (abbreviated to *Chlet*)—a Court which, under the old order of things, represented the present Court of First Instance (or County Court).

So in this dark office, thick with dust, there was, as in all its fellows, something repulsive to the clients — something which made it one of the most hideous monstrosities of Paris. Nay, were it not for the moldy sacristies where prayers are weighed out and paid for like groceries and for the old-clothes shops, where flutter the rags that blight all the illusions of life by showing us the last end of all our festivities—an attorney's office would be, of all social marts, the most loathsome. But we might say the same of the gambling-hell, of the Law Court, of the lottery office, of the brothel.

But why? In these places, perhaps, the drama being played in a man's soul makes him indifferent to accessories, which would also account for the single-mindedness of great thinkers and men of great ambitions.

"Where is my penknife?"

"I am eating my breakfast."

"You go and be hanged! here is a blot on the copy."

"Silence, gentlemen!"

These various exclamations were uttered simultaneously at the moment when the old client shut the door with the sort of humility which disfigures the movements of a man down on his luck. The stranger tried to smile, but the muscles of his face relaxed as he vainly looked for some symptoms of amenity on the inexorably indifferent faces of the six clerks. Accustomed, no doubt, to gauge men, he very politely addressed the gutter-jumper, hoping to

get a civil answer from this boy of all work.

"Monsieur, is your master at home?"

The pert messenger made no reply, but patted his ear with the fingers of his left hand, as much as to say, "I am deaf."

"What do you want, sir?" asked Godeschal, swallowing as he spoke a mouthful of bread big enough to charge a four-pounder, flourishing his knife and crossing his legs, throwing up one foot in the air to the level of his eyes.

"This is the fifth time I have called," replied the victim. "I wish to speak to M. Derville."

"On business?"

"Yes, but I can explain it to no one but——"

"M. Derville is in bed; if you want to consult him on some difficulty, he does no serious work till midnight. But if you will lay the case before us, we could help you just as well as he can to——"

The stranger was unmoved; he looked timidly about him, like a dog who has got into a strange kitchen and expects a kick. By grace of their profession, lawyers' clerks have no fear of thieves; they did not suspect the owner of the box-coat, and left him to study the place, where he looked in vain for a chair to sit on, for he was evidently tired. Attorneys, on principle, do not have many chairs in their offices. The inferior client, being kept waiting on his feet, goes away grumbling, but then he does not waste time, which, as an old lawyer once said, is not allowed for when the bill is taxed.

"Monsieur," said the old man, "as I have already told you, I cannot explain my business to anyone but M. Derville. I will wait till he is up."

Boucard had finished his bill. He smelt the fragrance of his chocolate, rose from his cane arm-chair, went to the chimney-piece, looked the old man from head to foot, stared at his coat, and made an indescribable grimace. He probably reflected that whichever way this client might be wrung, it would be impossible to squeeze out a centime, so he put in a few brief words to rid the office of a bad customer.

"It is the truth, monsieur. The chief only works at night. If your business is important, I recommend you to return at one in the morning." The stranger looked at the head clerk with a bewildered expression, and remained motionless for a moment. The clerks, accustomed to every change of countenance, and the odd whimsicalities to which indecision · absence of mind give rise in "parties," went on eating, making as much with their jaws as horses over a manger, and paying no further heed to the old man.

"I will come again to-night," said the stranger at length, with the tenacious desire, peculiar to the unfortunate, to catch humanity at fault.

The only irony allowed to poverty is to drive Justice and Benevolence to unjust denials. When a poor wretch has convicted Society of falsehood, he throws himself more eagerly on the mercy of God.

"What do you think of that for a cracked pot?" said Simonnin, without waiting till the old man had shut the door.

"He looks as if he had been buried and dug up again," said a clerk.

"He is some colonel who wants his arrears of pay," said the head clerk.

"No, he is a retired concierge," said Godeschal.

"I bet you he is a nobleman," cried Boucard.

"I bet you he has been a porter," retorted Godeschal. "Only porters are gifted by nature with shabby box-coats, as worn and greasy and frayed as that old body's. And did you see his trodden-down boots that let the water in, and his stock which serves for a shirt? He has slept in a dry arch."

"He may be of noble birth, and yet have pulled the door-latch," cried Desroches. "It has been known!"

"No," Boucard insisted, in the midst of laughter, "I maintain that he was a brewer in 1789, and a colonel in the time of the Republic."

"I bet theater tickets round that he never was a soldier," said Godeschal.

"Done with you," answered Boucard.

"Monsieur! Monsieur!" shouted the little messenger, opening the window.

"What are you at now, Simonnet?" asked Boucard.

"I am calling him that you may ask him whether he is a colonel or a porter; he must know."

All the clerks laughed. As to the old man, he was already coming upstairs again.

"What can we say to him?" cried Godeschal.

"Leave it to me," replied Boucard.

The poor man came in nervously, his eyes cast down, perhaps not to betray how hungry he was by looking too greedily at the eatables.

"Monsieur," said Boucard. "will you have the kindness to leave your name, so that M. Derville may know——"

"Chabert."

"The Colonel who was killed at Eylau?" asked Huré, who, having so far said nothing, was jealous of adding a jest to all the others.

"The same, Monsieur," replied the good man, with antique simplicity. And he went away.

"Whew!"

"Done brown!"

"Poof!"

"Oh!"

"Ah!"

"Boum!"

"The old rogue!"

"Ting-a-ring-ting!"

"Sold again!"

"Monsieur Desroches, you are going to the play without paying," said Huré to the fourth clerk, giving him a slap on the shoulder that might have killed a rhinoceros.

There was a storm of cat-calls, cries, and exclamations, which all the onomatopeia of the language would fail to represent.

"Which theater shall we go to?"

"To the opera," cried the head clerk.

"In the first place," said Godeschal, "I never mentioned which theater. I might, if I chose, take you to see Madame Saqui."

"Madame Saqui is not the play."

"What is a play?" replied Godeschal. "First, we must define the point of fact. What did I bet, gentlemen? A play. What is a play? A spectacle. What is a spectacle? Something to be seen——"

"But on that principle you would pay your bet by taking us to see the water

run under the Pont Neuf!" cried Simonnin, interrupting him.

"To be seen for money," Godeschal added.

"But a great many things are to be seen for money that are not plays. The definition is defective," said Desroches. "But do listen to me!"

"You are talking nonsense, my dear boy," said Boucard.

"Is Curtius's a play?" said Godeschal.

"No," said the head clerk, "it is a collection of figures—but it is a spectacle."

"I bet you a hundred francs to a sou," Godeschal resumed, "that Curtius's Waxworks forms such a show as might be called a play or theater. It contains a thing to be seen at various prices, according to the place you choose to occupy."

"And so on, and so forth!" said Simonnin.

"You mind I don't box your ears!" said Godeschal.

The clerks shrugged their shoulders.

"Besides, it is not proved that that old ape was not making game of us," he said, dropping his argument, which was drowned in the laughter of the other clerks. "On my honor, Colonel Chabert is really and truly dead. His wife is married again to Comte Ferraud, Councilor of State. Madame Ferraud is one of my clients."

"Come, the case is remanded till to-morrow," said Boucard. "To work, gentlemen. The deuce is in it; we get nothing done here. Finish copying that appeal; it must be handed in before the sitting of the Fourth Chamber, judgment is to be given to-day. Come, on you go!"

"If he really were Colonel Chabert, would not that impudent rascal Simonnin have felt the leather of his boot in the right place when he pretended to be deaf?" said Desroches, regarding this remark as more conclusive than Godeschal's.

"Since nothing is settled," said Boucard, "let us all agree to go to the upper boxes of the Français and see Thelma in *Nero*. Simonnin may go to the pit."

And thereupon the head clerk sat down at his table, and the others followed his example.

"*Given in June eighteen hundred and fourteen* (in words)," said Godeschal. "Ready?"

"Yes," replied the two copying clerks and the engrosser, whose pens forthwith began to creak over the stamped paper, making as much noise in the office as a hundred cock-chafers imprisoned by schoolboys in paper cages.

"*And we hope that my lords on the Bench,*" the extemporizing clerk went on. "Stop! I must read my sentence through again. I do not understand it myself."

"Forty-six (that must often happen) and three forty-nines," said Boucard.

"*We hope,*" Godeschal began again, after reading all through the document, "*that my lords on the Bench will not be less magnanimous than the august author of the decree, and that they will do justice against the miserable claims of the acting committee of the chief Board of the Legion of Honor by interpreting the law in the wide sense we have here set forth*——"

"Monsieur Godeschal, wouldn't you like a glass of water?" said the little messenger.

"That imp of a boy!" said Boucard. "Here, get on your double-soled shanksmare, take this packet, and spin off to the Invalides."

"*Here set forth,*" Godeschal went on. "Add *in the interest of Madame la Vicomtesse* (at full length) *de Grandlieu.*"

"What!" cried the chief, "are you thinking of drawing up an appeal in the case of Vicomtesse de Grandlieu against the Legion of Honor—a case for the office to stand or fall by? You are something like an ass! Have the goodness to put aside your copies and your notes; you may keep all that for the case of Navarreins against the Hospitals. It is late; I will draw up a little petition myself, with a due allowance of 'inasmuch,' and go to the Courts myself."

This scene is typical of the thousand delights which, when we look back on our youth, make us say, "Those were good times."

At about one in the morning Colonel Chabert, self-styled, knocked at the door of Maître Derville, attorney to the Court of First Instance in the Department of the Seine. The porter told him that Monsieur Derville had not yet come in. The old man said he had an appointment, and was shown upstairs to the rooms occupied by the famous lawyer, who, notwithstanding his youth, was considered to have one of the longest heads in Paris.

Having rung, the distrustful applicant was not a little astonished at finding the head clerk busily arranging in a convenient order on his master's dining-room table the papers relating to the cases to be tried on the morrow. The clerk, not less astonished, bowed to the Colonel and begged him to take a seat, which the client did.

"On my word, Monsieur, I thought you were joking yesterday when you named such an hour for an interview," said the old man, with the forced mirth of a ruined man, who does his best to smile.

"The clerks were joking, but they were speaking the truth too," replied the man, going on with his work. "M. Derville chooses this hour for studying his cases, taking stock of their possibilities, arranging how to conduct them, deciding on the line of defense. His prodigious intellect is freer at this hour—the only time when he can have the silence and quiet needed for the conception of good ideas. Since he entered the profession, you are the third person to come to him for a consultation at this midnight hour. After coming in the chief will discuss each case, read everything, spend four or five hours perhaps over the business, then he will ring for me and explain to me his intentions. In the morning from ten till two he hears what his clients have to say, then he spends the rest of his day in appointments. In the evening he goes into society to keep up his connections. So he has only the night for undermining his cases, ransacking the arsenal of the Code, and laying his plan of battle. He is determined never to lose a case; he loves his art. He will not undertake every case, as his brethren do. That is his life, an exceptionally active one. And he makes a great deal of money."

As he listened to this explanation, the old man sat silent, and his strange face

assumed an expression so bereft of intelligence, that the clerk, after looking at him, thought no more about him.

A few minutes later Derville came in, in evening dress; his head clerk opened the door to him, and went back to finish arranging the papers. The young lawyer paused for a moment in amazement on seeing in the dim light the strange client who awaited him. Colonel Chabert was as absolutely immovable as one of the wax figures in Curtius's collection to which Godeschal had proposed to treat his fellow-clerks. This quiescence would not have been a subject for astonishment if it had not completed the supernatural aspect of the man's whole person. The old soldier was dry and lean. His forehead, intentionally hidden under a smoothly combed wig, gave him a look of mystery. His eyes seemed shrouded in a transparent film; you would have compared them to dingy mother-of-pearl with a blue iridescence changing in the gleam of the wax-lights. His face, pale, livid, and as thin as a knife, if I may use such a vulgar expression, was as the face of the dead. Round his neck was a tight black silk stock.

Below the dark line of this rag the body was so completely hidden in shadow that a man of imagination might have supposed the old head was due to some chance play of light and shade, or have taken it for a portrait by Rembrandt, without a frame. The brim of the hat which covered the old man's brow cast a black line of shadow on the upper part of the face. This grotesque effect, though natural, threw into relief by contrast the white furrows, the cold wrinkles, the colorless tone of the corpse-like countenance. And the absence of all movement in the figure, of all fire in the eye, were in harmony with a certain look of melancholy madness, and the deteriorating symptoms characteristic of senility, giving the face an indescribably ill-starred look which no human words could render.

But an observer, especially a lawyer, could also have read in this stricken man the signs of deep sorrow, the traces of grief which had worn into this face, as drops of water from the sky falling on fine marble at last destroy its beauty. A physician, an author, or a judge might have discerned a whole drama at the sight of its sublime horror, while the least charm was its resemblance to the grotesques which artists amuse themselves by sketching on a corner of the lithographic stone while chatting with a friend.

On seeing the attorney, the stranger started, with the convulsive thrill that comes over a poet when a sudden noise rouses him from a fruitful reverie in silence and at night. The old man hastily removed his hat and rose to bow to the young man; the leather lining of his hat was doubtless very greasy; his wig stuck to it without his noticing it, and left his head bare, showing his skull horribly disfigured by a scar beginning at the nape of the neck and ending over the right eye, a prominent seam all across his face. The sudden removal of the dirty wig which the poor man wore to hide this gash gave the two lawyers no inclination to laugh, so horrible to behold was this riven skull. The first idea suggested by the sight of this old wound was, "His intelligence must have escaped through that cut."

"If this is not Colonel Chabert, he is some thoroughgoing trooper!" thought Boucard.

"Monsieur," said Derville, "to whom have I the honor of speaking?"

"To Colonel Chabert."

"Which?"

"He who was killed at Eylau," replied the old man.

On hearing this strange speech, the lawyer and his clerk glanced at each other, as much as to say, "He is mad."

"Monsieur," the Colonel went on, "I wish to confide to you the secret of my position."

A thing well worthy of note is the natural intrepidity of lawyers. Whether from the habit of receiving a great many persons, or from the deep sense of the protection conferred on them by the law, or from confidence in their mission, they enter everywhere, fearing nothing, like priests and physicians. Derville signed to Boucard, who vanished.

"During the day, sir," said the attorney, "I am not so miserly of my time, but at night every minute is precious. So be brief and concise. Go to the facts without digression. I will ask for any explanations I may consider necessary. Speak."

Having bid his strange client to be seated, the young man sat down at the table; but while he gave his attention to the deceased Colonel, he turned over the bundles of papers.

"You know, perhaps," said the dead man, "that I commanded a cavalry regiment at Eylau. I was of important service to the success of Murat's famous charge which decided the victory. Unhappily for me, my death is a historical fact, recorded in *Victoires et Conquêtes*, where it is related in full detail. We cut through the three Russian lines, which at once closed up and formed again, so that we had to repeat the movement back again. At the moment when we were nearing the Emperor, after having scattered the Russians, I came against a squadron of the enemy's cavalry. I rushed at the obstinate brutes. Two Russian officers, perfect giants, attacked me both at once. One of them gave me a cut across the head that crashed through everything, even a black silk cap I wore next my head, and cut deep into the skull. I fell from my horse. Murat came up to support me; he rode over my body, he and all his men, fifteen hundred of them—there might have been more. My death was announced to the Emperor, who as a precaution—for he was fond of me, was the Master—wished to know if there were no hope of saving the man he had to thank for such a vigorous attack. He sent two surgeons to identify me and bring me into hospital, saying, perhaps too carelessly, for he was very busy, 'Go and see whether by any chance poor Chabert is still alive.' These rascally sawbones, who had just seen me lying under the hoofs of the horses of two regiments, no doubt did not trouble themselves to feel my pulse, and reported that I was quite dead. The certificate of death was probably made out in accordance with the rules of military jurisprudence."

As he heard his visitor express himself with complete lucidity, and relate a story so probable though so strange, the young lawyer ceased fingering the papers, rested his left elbow on the table, and

with his head on his hand looked steadily at the Colonel.

"Do you know, Monsieur, that I am lawyer to the Comtesse Ferraud," he said, interrupting the speaker, "Colonel Chabert's widow?"

"My wife—yes, Monsieur. Therefore, after a hundred fruitless attempts to interest lawyers, who have all thought me mad, I made up my mind to come to you. I will tell you of my misfortunes afterwards; for the present, allow me to prove the facts, explaining rather how things must have fallen out rather than how they did occur. Certain circumstances, known, I suppose, to no one but the Almighty, compel me to speak of some things as hypothetical. The wounds I had received must presumably have produced tetanus, or have thrown me into a state analogous to that of a disease called, I believe, catalepsy. Otherwise how is it conceivable that I should have been stripped, as is the custom in time of war, and thrown into the common grave by the men ordered to bury the dead?

"Allow me here to refer to a detail of which I could know nothing till after the event, which, after all, I must speak of as my death. At Stuttgart, in 1814, I met an old quartermaster of my regiment. This dear fellow, the only man who chose to recognize me, and of whom I will tell you more later, explained the marvel of my preservation, by telling me that my horse was shot in the flank at the moment when I was wounded. Man and beast went down together, like a monk cut out of card-paper. As I fell, to the right or to the left, I was no doubt covered by the body of my horse, which protected me from being trampled to death or hit by a ball.

"When I came to myself, Monsieur, I was in a position and an atmosphere of which I could give you no idea if I talked till to-morrow. The little air there was to breathe was foul. I wanted to move, and found no room. I opened my eyes, and saw nothing. The most alarming circumstance was the lack of air, and this enlightened me as to my situation. I understood that no fresh air could penetrate to me, and that I must die. This thought took off the sense of intolerable pain which had aroused me. There was a violent singing in my ears. I heard—or I thought I heard, I will assert nothing—groans from the world of dead among whom I was lying. Some nights I still think I hear those stifled moans; though the remembrance of that time is very obscure, and my memory very indistinct, in spite of my impressions of far more acute suffering I was fated to go through, and which have confused my ideas.

"But there was something more awful than cries; there was a silence such as I have never known elsewhere—literally, the silence of the grave. At last, by raising my hands and feeling the dead, I discerned a vacant space between my head and the human carrion above. I could thus measure the space, granted by a chance of which I knew not the cause. It would seem that, thanks to the carelessness and the haste with which we had been pitched into the trench, two dead bodies had leaned across and against each other, forming an angle like that made by two cards when a child is building a card castle. Feeling about me at once, for there was no time for

play, I happily felt an arm lying detached, the arm of a Hercules. A stout bone, to which I owed my rescue. But for this unhoped-for help, I must have perished. But with a fury you may imagine, I began to work my way through the bodies which separated me from the layer of earth which had no doubt been thrown over us—I say us, as if there had been others living! I worked with a will, Monsieur, for here I am! But to this day I do not know how I succeeded in getting through the pile of flesh which formed a barrier between me and life. You will say I had three arms. This crowbar, which I used cleverly enough, opened out a little air between the bodies I moved, and I economized my breath. At last I saw daylight, but through snow!

"At that moment I perceived that my head was cut open. Happily my blood, or that of my comrades, or perhaps the torn skin of my horse, who knows, had in coagulating formed a sort of natural plaster. But, in spite of it, I fainted away when my head came into contact with the snow. However, the little warmth left in me melted the snow about me; and when I recovered consciousness, I found myself in the middle of a round hole, where I stood shouting as long as I could. But the sun was rising, so I had very little chance of being heard. Was there anyone in the fields yet? I pulled myself up, using my feet as a spring, resting on one of the dead, whose ribs were firm. You may suppose that this was not the moment for saying, 'Respect courage in misfortune!' In short, Monsieur, after enduring the anguish, if the word is strong enough for my frenzy of seeing for a long time, yes, quite a long time, those cursed Germans flying from a voice they heard where they could see no one, I was dug out by a woman, who was brave or curious enough to come close to my head, which must have looked as though it had sprouted from the ground like a mushroom. This woman went to fetch her husband, and between them they got me to their poor hovel.

"It would seem that I must have again fallen into a catalepsy—allow me to use the word to describe a state of which I have no idea, but which, from the account given by my hosts, I suppose to have been the effect of that malady. I remained for six months between life and death; not speaking, or, if I spoke, talking in delirium. At last, my hosts got me admitted to the hospital at Heilsberg.

"You will understand, Monsieur, that I came out of the womb of the grave as naked as I came from my mother's; so that six months afterwards, when I remembered, one fine morning, that I had been Colonel Chabert, and when, on recovering my wits, I tried to exact from my nurse rather more respect than she paid to any poor devil, all my companions in the ward began to laugh. Luckily for me, the surgeon, out of professional pride, had answered for my cure, and was naturally interested in his patient. When I told him coherently about my former life, this good man, named Sparchmann, signed a deposition, drawn up in the legal form of his country, giving an account of the miraculous way in which I had escaped from the trench dug for the dead, the day and hour when I had been found by my benefactress and her husband, the nature

and exact spot of my injuries, adding to these documents a description of my person.

"Well, Monsieur, I have neither these important pieces of evidence, nor the declaration I made before a notary at Heilsberg, with a view to establishing my identity. From the day when I was turned out of that town by the events of war, I have wandered about like a vagabond, begging my bread, treated as a madman when I have told my story, without ever having found or earned a sou to enable me to recover the deeds which would prove my statements, and restore me to society. My sufferings have often kept me for six months at a time in some little town, where every care was taken of the invalid Frenchman, but where he was laughed at to his face as soon as he said he was Colonel Chabert. For a long time that laughter, those doubts, used to put me into rages which did me harm, and which even led to my being locked up at Stuttgart as a madman. And, indeed, as you may judge from my story, there was ample reason for shutting a man up.

"At the end of two years' detention, which I was compelled to submit to, after hearing my keepers say a thousand times, 'Here is a poor man who thinks he is Colonel Chabert' to people who would reply, 'Poor fellow!' I became convinced of the impossibility of my own adventure. I grew melancholy, resigned, and quiet, and gave up calling myself Colonel Chabert, in order to get out of my prison, and see France once more. Oh, Monsieur! To see Paris again was a delirium which I——"

Without finishing his sentence, Colonel Chabert fell into a deep study, which Derville respected.

"One fine day," his visitor resumed, "one spring day, they gave me the key of the fields, as we say, and ten thalers, admitting that I talked quite sensibly on all subjects, and no longer called myself Colonel Chabert. On my honor, at that time, and even to this day, sometimes I hate my name. I wish I were not myself. The sense of my rights kills me. If my illness had but deprived me of all memory of my past life, I could be happy. I should have entered the service again under any name, no matter what, and should, perhaps, have been made Field-Marshal in Austria or Russia. Who knows?"

"Monsieur," said the attorney, "you have upset all my ideas. I feel as if I heard you in a dream. Pause for a moment, I beg of you."

"You are the only person," said the Colonel, with a melancholy look, "who ever listened to me so patiently. No lawyer has been willing to lend me ten napoleons to enable me to procure from Germany the necessary documents to begin my lawsuit——"

"What lawsuit?" said the attorney, who had forgotten his client's painful position in listening to the narrative of his past sufferings.

"Why, Monsieur, is not the Comtesse Ferraud my wife? She has thirty thousand francs a year, which belong to me, and she will not give me a sou. When I tell lawyers these things—men of sense; when I propose—I, a beggar—to bring an action against a Count and Countess; when I—a dead man—bring up as against a certificate of death a certificate of marriage and registers of

births, they show me out, either with the air of cold politeness, which you all know how to assume to rid yourselves of a hapless wretch, or brutally, like men who think they have to deal with a swindler or a madman—it depends on their nature. I have been buried under the dead; but now I am buried under the living, under papers, under facts, under the whole of society, which wants to shove me underground again!"

"Pray resume your narrative," said Derville.

"'Pray resume it!'" cried the hapless old man, taking the young lawyer's hand. "That is the first polite word I have heard since——"

The Colonel wept. Gratitude choked his voice. The appealing and unutterable eloquence that lies in the eyes, in a gesture, even in silence, entirely convinced Derville, and touched him deeply.

"Listen, Monsieur," said he; "I have this evening won three hundred francs at cards. I may very well lay out half that sum in making a man happy. I will begin the inquiries and researches necessary to obtain the documents of which you speak, and until they arrive I will give you five francs a day. If you are Colonel Chabert, you will pardon the smallness of the loan as coming from a young man who has his fortune to make. Proceed."

The Colonel, as he called himself, sat for a moment motionless and bewildered; the depth of his woes had no doubt destroyed his powers of belief. Though he was eager in pursuit of his military distinction, of his fortune, of himself, perhaps it was in obedience to the inexplicable feeling, the latent garm in every man's heart, to which we owe the experiments of alchemists, the passion for glory, the discoveries of astronomy and of physics, everything which prompts man to expand his being by multiplying himself through deeds or ideas. In his mind the *Ego* was now but a secondary object, just as the vanity of success or the pleasure of winning becomes dearer to the gambler than the object he has at stake. The young lawyer's words were as a miracle to this man, for ten years repudiated by his wife, by justice, by the whole social creation. To find in a lawyer's office the ten gold pieces which had so long been refused him by so many people, and in so many ways! The Colonel was like the lady who, having been ill of a fever for fifteen years, fancied she had some fresh complaint when she was cured. There are joys in which we have ceased to believe; they fall on us, it is like a thunderbolt; they burn us. The poor man's gratitude was too great to find utterance. To superficial observers he seemed cold, but Derville saw complete honesty under this amazement. A swindler would have found his voice.

"Where was I?" said the Colonel, with the simplicity of a child or of a soldier, for there is often something of the child in a true soldier, and almost always something of the soldier in a child, especially in France.

"At Stuttgart. You were out of prison," said Derville.

"You know my wife?" asked the Colonel.

"Yes," said Derville, with a bow.

"What is she like?"

"Still quite charming."

The old man held up his hand, and

seemed to be swallowing down some secret anguish with the grave and solemn resignation that is characteristic of men who have stood the ordeal of blood and fire on the battlefield.

"Monsieur," said he, with a sort of cheerfulness—for he breathed again, the poor Colonel; he had again risen from the grave; he had just melted a covering of snow less easily thawed than that which had once before frozen his head; and he drew a deep breath, as if he had just escaped from a dungeon—"Monsieur, if I had been a handsome young fellow, none of my misfortunes would have befallen me. Women believe in men when they flavor their speeches with the word Love. They hurry then, they come, they go, they are everywhere at once; they intrigue, they assert facts, they play the very devil for a man who takes their fancy. But how could I interest a woman? I had a face like a Requiem. I was dressed like a *sans-culotte*. I was more like an Eskimo than a Frenchman—I, who had formerly been considered one of the smartest of fops in 1799!—I, Chabert, Count of the Empire.

"Well, on the very day when I was turned out into the streets like a dog, I met the quartermaster of whom I just now spoke. This old soldier's name was Boutin. The poor devil and I made the queerest pair of broken-down hacks I ever set eyes on. I met him out walking; but though I recognized him, he could not possibly guess who I was. We went into a tavern together. In there, when I told him my name, Boutin's mouth opened from ear to ear in a roar of laughter, like the bursting of a mortar. That mirth, Monsieur, was one of the keenest pangs I have known. It told me without disguise how great were the changes in me! I was, then, unrecognizable even to the humblest and most grateful of my former friends!

"I had once saved Boutin's life, but it was only the repayment of a debt I owed him. I need not tell you how he did me this service; it was at Ravenna, in Italy. The house where Boutin prevented my being stabbed was not extremely respectable. At that time I was not a colonel, but, like Boutin himself, a common trooper. Happily there were certain details of this adventure which could be known only to us two, and when I recalled them to his mind his incredulity diminished. I then told him the story of my singular experiences. Although my eyes and my voice, he told me, were strangely altered, although I had neither hair, teeth, nor eyebrows, and was as colorless as an Albino, he at last recognized his Colonel in the beggar, after a thousand questions, which I answered triumphantly.

"He related his adventures; they were not less extraordinary than my own; he had lately come back from the frontiers of China, which he had tried to cross after escaping from Siberia. He told me of the catastrophe of the Russian campaign, and of Napoleon's first abdication. That news was one of the things which caused me most anguish!

"We were two curious derelicts, having been rolled over the globe as pebbles are rolled by the ocean when storms bear them from shore to shore. Between us we had seen Egypt, Syria, Spain, Russia, Holland, Germany, Italy and Dalmatia, England, China, Tartary, Siberia; the only thing wanting was that neither of us had been to America or the Indies.

Finally, Boutin, who still was more locomotive than I, undertook to go to Paris as quickly as might be to inform my wife of the predicament in which I was. I wrote a long letter full of details to Madame Chabert. That, Monsieur, was the fourth! If I had had any relations, perhaps nothing of all this might have happened; but, to be frank with you, I am but a workhouse child, a soldier, whose sole fortune was his courage, whose sole family is mankind at large, whose country is France, whose only protector is the Almighty.—Nay, I am wrong! I had a father—the Emperor! Ah! if he were but here, the dear man! If he could see *his Chabert,* as he used to call me, in the state in which I am now, he would be in a rage! What is to be done? Our sun is set, and we are all out in the cold now. After all, political events might account for my wife's silence.

"Boutin set out. He was a lucky fellow! He had two bears, admirably trained, which brought him in a living. I could not go with him; the pain I suffered forbade my walking long stages. I wept, Monsieur, when we parted, after I had gone as far as my state allowed in company with him and his bears. At Carlsruhe I had an attack of neuralgia in the head, and lay for six weeks on straw in an inn.—I should never have ended if I were to tell you all the distresses of my life as a beggar. Moral suffering, before which physical suffering pales, nevertheless excites less pity, because it is not seen. I remember shedding tears, as I stood in front of a fine house in Strassburg where I once had given an entertainment, and where nothing was given me, not even a piece of bread. Having agreed with Boutin on the road I was to take, I went to every post-office to ask if there were a letter or some money for me. I arrived at Paris without having found either. What despair I had been forced to endure! 'Boutin must be dead!' I told myself, and in fact the poor fellow was killed at Waterloo. I heard of his death later, and by mere chance. His errand to my wife had, of course, been fruitless.

"At last I entered Paris—with the Cossacks. To me this was grief on grief. On seeing the Russians in France I quite forgot that I had no shoes on my feet nor money in my pocket. Yes, Monsieur, my clothes were in tatters. The evening before I reached Paris I was obliged to bivouac in the woods of Claye. The chill of the night air no doubt brought on an attack of some nameless complaint, which seized me as I was crossing the Faubourg Saint-Martin. I dropped almost senseless at the door of an ironmonger's shop. When I recovered I was in a bed in the Hôtel-Dieu. There I stayed very contentedly for about a month. I was then turned out; I had no money, but I was well, and my feet were on the good stones of Paris. With what delight and haste did I make my way to the Rue du Mont-Blanc, where my wife should be living in a house belonging to me! Bah! the Rue du Mont-Blanc was now the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin; I could not find my house; it had been sold and pulled down. Speculators had built several houses over my gardens. Not knowing that my wife had married M. Ferraud, I could obtain no information.

"At last I went to the house of an old lawyer who had been in charge of my

affairs. This worthy man was dead, after selling his connection to a younger man. This gentleman informed me, to my great surprise, of the administration of my estate, the settlement of the moneys, of my wife's marriage, and the birth of her two children. When I told him that I was Colonel Chabert, he laughed so heartily that I left him without saying another word. My detention at Stuttgart had suggested possibilities of Charenton, and I determined to act with caution. Then, Monsieur, knowing where my wife lived, I went to her house, my heart high with hope.—Well," said the Colonel, with a gesture of concentrated fury, "when I called under an assumed name I was not admitted, and on the day when I used my own I was turned out of doors.

"To see the Countess come home from a ball or the play in the early morning, I have sat whole nights through, crouching close to the wall of her gateway. My eyes pierced the depths of the carriage, which flashed past me with the swiftness of lightning, and I caught a glimpse of the woman who is my wife and no longer mine. Oh, from that day I have lived for vengeance!" cried the old man in a hollow voice, and suddenly standing up in front of Derville. "She knows that I am alive; since my return she has had two letters written with my own hand. She loves me no more!—I—I know not whether I love or hate her. I long for her and curse her by turns. To me she owes all her fortune, all her happiness; well, she has not sent me the very smallest pittance. Sometimes I do not know what will become of me!"

With these words the veteran dropped on to his chair again and remained motionless. Derville sat in silence, studying his client.

"It is a serious business," he said at length, mechanically. "Even granting the genuineness of the documents to be procured from Heilsburg, it is not proved to me that we can at once win our case. It must go before three tribunals in succession. I must think such a matter over with a clear head; it is quite exceptional."

"Oh," said the Colonel, coldly, with a haughty jerk of his head, "if I fail, I can die—but not alone."

The feeble old man had vanished. The eyes were those of a man of energy, lighted up with the spark of desire and revenge.

"We must perhaps compromise," said the lawyer.

"Compromise!" echoed Colonel Chabert. "Am I dead, or am I alive?"

"I hope, Monsieur," the attorney went on, "that you will follow my advice. Your cause is mine. You will soon perceive the interest I take in your situation, almost unexampled in judicial records. For the moment, I will give you a letter to my notary, who will pay you to your order fifty francs every ten days. It would be unbecoming for you to come here to receive alms. If you are Colonel Chabert, you ought to be at no man's mercy. I shall regard these advances as a loan; you have estates to recover; you are rich."

This delicate compassion brought tears to the old man's eyes. Derville rose hastily, for it was perhaps not correct for a lawyer to show emotion; he went into the adjoining room, and came back with an unsealed letter, which he gave

to the Colonel. When the poor man held it in his hand, he felt through the paper two gold pieces.

"Will you be good enough to describe the documents, and tell me the name of the town, and in what kingdom?" said the lawyer.

The Colonel dictated the information, and verified the spelling of the names of places; then he took his hat in one hand, looked at Derville, and held out the other—a horny hand, saying with much simplicity—

"On my honor, sir, after the Emperor, you are the man to whom I shall owe most. You are a splendid fellow!"

The attorney clapped his hand into the Colonel's, saw him to the stairs, and held a light for him.

"Boucard," said Derville to his head clerk, "I have just listened to a tale that may cost me five-and-twenty louis. If I am robbed, I shall not regret the money, for I shall have seen the most consummate actor of the day."

When the Colonel was in the street and close to a lamp, he took the two twenty-franc pieces out of the letter and looked at them for a moment under the light. It was the first gold he had seen for nine years.

"I may smoke cigars!" he said to himself.

About three months after this interview, at night, in Derville's room, the notary commissioned to advance the half-pay on Derville's account to his eccentric client, came to consult the attorney on a serious matter, and began by begging him to refund the six hundred francs that the old soldier had received.

"Are you amusing yourself with pensioning the old army?" said the notary, laughing—a young man named Crottat, who had just bought up the office in which he had been head clerk, his chief having fled in consequence of a disastrous bankruptcy.

"I have to thank you, my dear sir, for reminding me of that affair," replied Derville. "My philanthropy will not carry me beyond twenty-five louis; I have, I fear, already been the dupe of my patriotism."

As Derville finished the sentence, he saw on his desk the papers his head clerk had laid out for him. His eye was struck by the appearance of the stamps —long, square, and triangular, in red and blue ink, which distinguished a letter that had come through the Prussian, Austrian, Bavarian, and French post-offices.

"Ah ha!" said he with a laugh, "here is the last act of the comedy; now we shall see if I have been taken in!"

He took up the letter and opened it; but he could not read it; it was written in German.

"Boucard, go yourself and have this letter translated, and bring it back immediately," said Derville, half opening his study door, and giving the letter to the head clerk.

The notary at Berlin, to whom the lawyer had written, informed him that the documents he had been requested to forward would arrive within a few days of this note announcing them. They were, he said, all perfectly regular and duly witnessed, and legally stamped to serve as evidence in law. He also informed him that almost all the witnesses to the facts recorded under the affidavits

were still to be found at Eylau, in Prussia, and that the woman to whom M. le Comte Chabert owed his life was still living in a suburb of Heilsberg.

"This looks like business," cried Derville, when Boucard had given him the substance of the letter. "But look here, my boy," he went on, addressing the notary, "I shall want some information which ought to exist in your office. Was it not that old rascal Roguin——?"

"We will say that unfortunate, that ill-used Roguin," interrupted Alexandre Crottat with a laugh.

"Well, was it not that ill-used man who has just carried off eight hundred thousand francs of his clients' money, and reduced several families to despair, who effected the settlement of Chabert's estate? I fancy I have seen that in the documents in our case of Ferraud."

"Yes," said Crottat. "It was when I was third clerk; I copied the papers and studied them thoroughly. Rose Chapotel, wife and widow of Hyacinthe, called Chabert, Count of the Empire, grand officer of the Legion of Honor. They had married without settlement; thus, they held all the property in common. To the best of my recollection, the personalty was about six hundred thousand francs. Before his marriage, Comte Chabert had made a will in favor of the hospitals of Paris, by which he left them one-quarter of the fortune he might possess at the time of his decease, the State to take the other quarter. The will was contested, there was a forced sale, and then a division, for the attorneys went at a pace. At the time of the settlement the monster who was then governing France handed over to the widow, by special decree, the portion bequeathed to the treasury."

"So that Comte Chabert's personal fortune was no more than three hundred thousand francs?"

"Consequently so it was, old fellow!" said Crottat. "You lawyers sometimes are very clear-headed, though you are accused of false practices in pleading for one side or the other."

Colonel Chabert, whose address was written at the bottom of the first receipt he had given the notary, was lodging in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, Rue du Petit-Banquier, with an old quartermaster of the Imperial Guard, now a cowkeeper, named Vergniaud. Having reached the spot, Derville was obliged to go on foot in search of his client, for his coachman declined to drive along an unpaved street, where the ruts were rather too deep for cab wheels. Looking about him on all sides, the lawyer at last discovered at the end of the street nearest to the boulevard, between two walls built of bones and mud, two shabby stone gate-posts, much knocked about by carts, in spite of two wooden stumps that served as blocks. These posts supported a cross beam with a pent-house coping of tiles, and on the beam, in red letters, were the words, "Vergniaud, dairyman." To the right of this inscription were some eggs, to the left a cow, all painted in white. The gate was open, and no doubt remained open all day. Beyond a good-sized yard there was a house facing the gate, if indeed the name of house may be applied to one of the hovels built in the neighborhood of Paris, which are like nothing else, not even the most wretched dwell-

ings in the country, of which they have all the poverty without their poetry.

Indeed, in the midst of fields, even a hovel may have a certain grace derived from the pure air, the verdure, the open country—a hill, a serpentine road, vineyards, quick-set hedges, moss-grown thatch, and rural implements; but poverty in Paris gains dignity only by horror. Though recently built, this house seemed ready to fall into ruins. None of its materials had found a legitimate use; they had been collected from the various demolitions which are going on every day in Paris. On a shutter made of the boards of a shop-sign Derville read the words, "Fancy Goods." The windows were all mismatched and grotesquely placed. The ground floor, which seemed to be the habitable part, was on one side raised above the soil, and on the other sunk in the rising ground. Between the gate and the house lay a puddle full of stable litter, into which flowed the rain-water and house waste. The back wall of this frail construction, which seemed rather more solidly built than the rest, supported a row of barred hutches, where rabbits bred their numerous families. To the right of the gate was the cowhouse, with a loft above for fodder; it communicated with the house through the dairy. To the left was a poultry yard, with a stable and pig-styes, the roofs finished, like that of the house, with rough deal boards nailed so as to overlap, and shabbily thatched with rushes.

Like most of the places where the elements of the huge meal daily devoured by Paris are every day prepared, the yard Derville now entered showed traces of the hurry that comes of the necessity for being ready at a fixed hour. The large pot-bellied tin cans in which milk is carried, and the little pots for cream, were flung pell-mell at the dairy door, with their linen-covered stoppers. The rags that were used to clean them, fluttered in the sunshine, riddled with holes, hanging to strings fastened to poles. The placid horse, of a breed known only to milk-women, had gone a few steps from the cart, and was standing in front of the stable, the door being shut. A goat was munching the shoots of a starved and dusty vine that clung to the cracked yellow wall of the house. A cat, squatting on the cream jars, was licking them over. The fowls, scared by Derville's approach, scuttered away screaming, and the watch-dog barked.

"And the man who decided the victory at Eylau is to be found here!" said Derville, to himself, as his eyes took in at a glance the general effect of the squalid scene.

The house had been left in charge of three little boys. One, who had climbed to the top of a cart loaded with hay, was pitching stones into the chimney of a neighboring house, in the hope that they might fall into a saucepan; another was trying to get a pig into a cart by the back board, which rested on the ground; while the third, hanging on in front, was waiting till the pig had got into the cart, to hoist it by making the whole thing tilt. When Derville asked them if M. Chabert lived there, neither of them replied, but all three looked at him with a sort of bright stupidity, if I may combine those two words. Derville repeated his questions, but without success. Provoked by the saucy cunning of these three imps he abused them with

the sort of pleasantry which young men think they have a right to address to little boys, and they broke the silence with a horse-laugh. Then Derville was angry.

The Colonel, hearing him, now came out of a little low room, close to the dairy, and stood on the threshold of his doorway with indescribable military coolness. He had in his mouth a very finely colored pipe—a technical phrase to a smoker—a humble, short clay pipe of the kind called *"brûle-gueule."* He lifted the peak of a dreadfully greasy cloth cap, saw Derville, and came straight across the midden to join his benefactor the sooner, calling out in friendly tones to the boys—

"Silence in the ranks!"

The children at once kept a respectful silence, which showed the power the old soldier had over them.

"Why did you not write to me?" he said to Derville. "Go along by the cow-house! There—the path is paved there," he exclaimed, seeing the lawyer's hesitancy, for he did not wish to wet his feet in the manure heap.

Jumping from one dry spot to another, Derville reached the door by which the Colonel had come out. Chabert seemed but ill pleased at having to receive him in the bedroom he occupied; and, in fact, Derville found but one chair there. The Colonel's bed consisted of some trusses of straw, over which his hostess had spread two or three of those old fragments of carpet, picked up heaven knows where, which milk-women use to cover the seats of their carts. The floor was simply the trodden earth. The walls, sweating saltpetre, green with mold, and full of cracks, were so excessively damp that on the side where the Colonel's bed was a reed mat had been nailed. The famous box-coat hung on a nail. Two pairs of old boots lay in a corner. There was not a sign of linen. On the worm-eaten table the *Bulletins de la Grande Armée,* reprinted by Plancher, lay open, and seemed to be the Colonel's reading; his countenance was calm and serene in the midst of this squalor. His visit to Derville seemed to have altered his features; the lawyer perceived in them traces of a happy feeling, a particular gleam set there by hope.

"Does the smell of a pipe annoy you?" he said, placing the dilapidated straw-bottomed chair for his lawyer.

"But, Colonel, you are dreadfully uncomfortable here!"

The speech was wrung from Derville by the distrust natural to lawyers, and the deplorable experience which they derive early in life from the appalling and obscure tragedies at which they look on.

"Here," said he to himself, "is a man who has of course spent my money in satisfying a trooper's three theological virtues—play, wine, and women!"

"To be sure, Monsieur, we are not distinguished for luxury here. It is a camp lodging, tempered by friendship, but——" And the soldier shot a deep glance at the man of law—"I have done no one wrong, I have never turned my back on anybody, and I sleep in peace."

Derville reflected that there would be some want of delicacy in asking his client to account for the sums of money he had advanced, so he merely said—

"But why would you not come to Paris, where you might have lived as

cheaply as you do here, but where you would have been better lodged?"

"Why," replied the Colonel, "the good folks with whom I am living had taken me in and fed me *gratis* for a year. How could I leave them just when I had a little money? Besides, the father of those three pickles is an old *Egyptian*——

"An Egyptian!"

"We give that name to the troopers who came back from the expedition into Egypt, of which I was one. Not merely are all who get back brothers; Vergniaud was in my regiment. We have shared a draught of water in the desert; and besides, I have not yet finished teaching his brats to read."

"He might have lodged you better for your money," said Derville.

"Bah!" said the Colonel, "his children sleep on the straw as I do. He and his wife have no better bed; they are very poor, you see. They have taken a bigger business than they can manage. But if I recover my fortune. . . . However, it does very well."

"Colonel, to-morrow, or next day, I shall receive your papers from Heilsberg. The woman who dug you out is still alive!"

"Curse the money! To think I haven't got any!" he cried, flinging his pipe on the ground.

Now, a well-colored pipe is to a smoker a precious possession; but the impulse was so natural, the emotion so generous, that every smoker, and the excise office itself, would have pardoned this crime of treason to tobacco. Perhaps the angels may have picked up the pieces.

"Colonel, it is an exceedingly complicated business," said Derville as they left the room to walk up and down in the sunshine.

"To me," said the soldier, "it appears exceedingly simple. I was thought to be dead, and here I am! Give me back my wife and my fortune; give me the rank of General, to which I have a right, for I was made Colonel of the Imperial Guard the day before the battle of Eylau."

"Things are not done so in the legal world," said Derville. "Listen to me. You are Colonel Chabert, I am glad to think it; but it has to be proved judicially to persons whose interest it will be to deny it. Hence, your papers will be disputed. That contention will give rise to ten or twelve preliminary inquiries. Every question will be sent under contradiction up to the supreme Court, and give rise to so many costly suits, which will hang on for a long time, however eagerly I may push them. Your opponents will demand an inquiry, which we cannot refuse, and which may necessitate the sending of a commission of investigation to Prussia. But even if we hope for the best; supposing that justice should at once recognize you as Colonel Chabert—can we know how the questions will be settled that will arise out of the very innocent bigamy committed by the Comtesse Ferraud?

"In your case, the point of law is unknown to the Code, and can only be decided as a point in equity, as a jury decides in the delicate cases presented by the social eccentricities of some criminal prosecutions. Now, you had no children by your marriage; M. le Comte Ferraud has two. The judges might pronounce against the marriage where

the family ties are weakest, to the confirmation of that where they are stronger, since it was contracted in perfect good faith. Would you be in a very becoming moral position if you insisted, at your age, and in your present circumstances, in resuming your rights over a woman who no longer loves you? You will have both your wife and her husband against you, two important persons who might influence the Bench. Thus, there are many elements which would prolong the case; you will have time to grow old in the bitterest regrets."

"And my fortune?"

"Do you suppose you had a fine fortune?"

"Had I not thirty thousand francs a year?"

"My dear Colonel, in 1799 you made a will before your marriage, leaving one-quarter of your property to hospitals."

"That is true."

"Well, when you were reported dead, it was necessary to make a valuation, and have a sale, to give this quarter away. Your wife was not particular about honesty to the poor. The valuation, in which she no doubt took care not to include the ready money or jewelry, or too much of the plate, and in which the furniture would be estimated at two-thirds of its actual cost, either to benefit her, or to lighten the succession duty, and also because a valuer can be held responsible for the declared value—the valuation thus made stood at six hundred thousand francs. Your wife had a right to half for her share. Everything was sold and bought in by her; she got something out of it all, and the hospitals got their seventy-five thousand francs. Then, as the remainder went to the State, since you had made no mention of your wife in your will, the Emperor restored to your widow by decree the residue which would have reverted to the Exchequer. So, now, what can you claim? Three hundred thousand francs, no more, and minus the costs."

"And you call that justice!" said the Colonel, in dismay.

"Why, certainly——"

"A pretty kind of justice!"

"So it is, my dear Colonel. You see, that what you thought so easy is not so. Madame Ferraud might even choose to keep the sum given to her by the Emperor."

"But she was not a widow. The decree is utterly void——"

"I agree with you. But every case can get a hearing. Listen to me. I think that under these circumstances a compromise would be both for her and for you the best solution of the question. You will gain by it a more considerable sum than you can prove a right to."

"That would be to sell my wife!"

"With twenty-four thousand francs a year you could find a woman who, in the position in which you are, would suit you better than your own wife, and make you happier. I propose going this very day to see the Comtesse Ferraud and sounding the ground; but I would not take such a step without giving you due notice."

"Let us go together."

"What, just as you are?" said the lawyer. "No, my dear Colonel, no. You might lose your case on the spot."

"Can I possibly gain it?"

"On every count," replied Derville. "But, my dear Colonel Chabert, you

overlook one thing. I am not rich; the price of my connection is not wholly paid up. If the Bench should allow you a maintenance, that is to say, a sum advanced on your prospects, they will not do so till you have proved that you are Comte Chabert, grand officer of the Legion of Honor."

"To be sure, I am a grand officer of the Legion of Honor; I had forgotten that," said he simply.

"Well, until then," Derville went on, "will you not have to engage pleaders, to have documents copied, to keep the underlings of the law going, and to support yourself? The expenses of the preliminary inquiries will, at a rough guess, amount to ten or twelve thousand francs. I have not so much to lend you—I am crushed as it is by the enormous interest I have to pay on the money I borrowed to buy my business; and you?—Where can you find it?"

Large tears gathered in the poor veteran's faded eyes, and rolled down his withered cheeks. This outlook of difficulties discouraged him. The social and the legal world weighed on his breast like a nightmare.

"I will go to the foot of the Vendôme column!" he cried. "I will call out: 'I am Colonel Chabert who rode through the Russian square at Eylau!'—The statue—he will know me."

"And you will find yourself in Charenton."

At this terrible name the soldier's transports collapsed.

"And will there be no hope for me at the Ministry of War?"

"The War Office!" said Derville. "Well, go there; but take a formal legal opinion with you, nullifying the certificate of your death. The Government offices would be only too glad if they could annihilate the men of the Empire."

The Colonel stood for a while, speechless, motionless, his eyes fixed, but seeing nothing, sunk in bottomless despair. Military justice is ready and swift; it decides with Turk-like finality, and almost always rightly. This was the only justice known to Chabert. As he saw the labyrinth of difficulties into which he must plunge, and how much money would be required for the journey, the poor old soldier was mortally hit in that power peculiar to man, and called the Will. He thought it would be impossible to live as party to a lawsuit; it seemed a thousand times simpler to remain poor and a beggar, or to enlist as a trooper if any regiment would pass him.

His physical and mental sufferings had already impaired his bodily health in some of the most important organs. He was on the verge of one of those maladies for which medicine has no name, and of which the seat is in some degree variable, like the nervous system itself, the part most frequently attacked of the whole human machine—a malady which may be designated as the heart-sickness of the unfortunate. However serious this invisible but real disorder might already be, it could still be cured by a happy issue. But a fresh obstacle, an unexpected incident, would be enough to wreck this vigorous constitution, to break the weakened springs, and produce the hesitancy, the aimless, unfinished movements, which physiologists know well in men undermined by grief.

Derville, detecting in his client the symptoms of extreme dejection, said to him—

"Take courage; the end of the business cannot fail to be in your favor. Only, consider whether you can give me your whole confidence and blindly accept the result I may think best for your interests."

"Do what you will," said Chabert.

"Yes, but you surrender yourself to me like a man marching to his death."

"Must I not be left to live without a position, without a name? Is that endurable?"

"That is not my view of it," said the lawyer. "We will try a friendly suit, to annul both your death certificate and your marriage, so as to put you in possession of your rights. You may even, by Comte Ferraud's intervention, have your name replaced on the army-list as general, and no doubt you will get a pension."

"Well, proceed then," said Chabert. "I put myself entirely in your hands."

"I will send you a power of attorney to sign," said Derville. "Good-by. Keep up your courage. If you want money, rely on me."

Chabert warmly wrung the lawyer's hand, and remained standing with his back against the wall, not having the energy to follow him excepting with his eyes. Like all men who know but little of legal matters, he was frightened by this unforseen struggle.

During their interview, several times the figure of a man posted in the street had come forward from behind one of the gate-pillars, watching for Derville to depart, and he now accosted the lawyer. He was an old man, wearing a blue waistcoat and a white-pleated kilt, like a brewer's; on his head was an otter-skin cap. His face was tanned, hollow-cheeked, and wrinkled, but ruddy on the cheek-bones by hard work and exposure to the open air.

"Asking your pardon, sir," said he, taking Derville by the arm, "if I take the liberty of speaking to you. But I fancied, from the look of you, that you were a friend of our General's."

"And what then?" replied Derville. "What concern have you with him?—But who are you?" said the cautious lawyer.

"I am Louis Vergniaud," he at once replied. "I have two words to say to you."

"So you are the man who has lodged Comte Chabert as I have found him?"

"Asking your pardon, sir, he has the best room. I would have given him mine if I had had but one; I could have slept in the stable. A man who has suffered as he has, who teaches my kids to read, a general, an Egyptian, the first lieutenant I ever served under—What do you think?—Of us all, he is best served. I shared what I had with him. Unfortunately, it is not much to boast of—bread, milk, eggs. Well, well; it's neighbor's fare, sir. And he is heartily welcome.—But he has hurt our feelings."

"He?"

"Yes, sir, hurt our feelings. To be plain with you, I have taken a larger business than I can manage, and he saw it. Well, it worried him; he must needs mind the horse! I says to him, 'Really, General——' 'Bah!' says he, 'I am not going to eat my head off doing nothing. I learned to rub a horse down

many a year ago.'—I had some bills out for the purchase money of my dairy—a fellow named Grados—Do you know him, sir?"

"But, my good man, I have not time to listen to your story. Only tell me how the Colonel offended you."

"He hurt our feelings, sir, as sure as my name is Louis Vergniaud, and my wife cried about it. He heard from our neighbors that we had not a sou to begin to meet the bills with. The old soldier, as he is, he saved up all you gave him, he watched for the bill to come in, and he paid it. Such a trick! While my wife and me, we knew he had no tobacco, poor old boy, and went without.—Oh, now—yes, he has his cigar every morning! I would sell my soul for it—No, we are hurt. Well, so I wanted to ask you—for he said you were a good sort—to lend us a hundred crowns on the stock, so that we may get him some clothes, and furnish his room. He thought he was getting us out of debt, you see? Well, it's just the other way; the old man is running us into debt, and hurt our feelings!—He ought not to have stolen a march on us like that. And we his friends, too!—On my word as an honest man, as sure as my name is Louis Vergniaud, I would sooner sell up and enlist than fail to pay you back your money——"

Derville looked at the dairyman, and stepped back a few paces to glance at the house, the yard, the manure-pool, the cowhouse, the rabbits, the children.

"On my honor, I believe it is characteristic of virtue to have nothing to do with riches!" thought he.

"All right, you shall have your hundred crowns, and more. But I shall not give them to you; the Colonel will be rich enough to help, and I will not deprive him of the pleasure."

"And will that be soon?"

"Why, yes."

"Ah, dear God! how glad my wife will be!" and the cowkeeper's tanned face seemed to expand.

"Now," said Derville to himself, as he got into his cab again, "let us call on our opponent. We must not show our hand, but try to see hers, and win the game at one stroke. She must be frightened. She is a woman. Now, what frightens women most? A woman is afraid of nothing but . . ."

And he set to work to study the Countess's position, falling into one of those brown studies to which great politicians give themselves up when concocting their own plans and trying to guess the secrets of a hostile Cabinet. Are not attorneys, in a way, statesmen in charge of private affairs?

But a brief survey of the situation in which the Comte Ferraud and his wife now found themselves is necessary for a comprehension of the lawyer's cleverness.

Monsieur le Comte Ferraud was the only son of a former Councilor in the old *Parlement* of Paris, who had emigrated during the Reign of Terror, and so, though he saved his head, lost his fortune. He came back under the Consulate, and remained persistently faithful to the cause of Louis XVIII, in whose circle his father had moved before the Revolution. He thus was one of the party in the Faubourg Saint-Germain which nobly stood out against Napoleon's blandishments. The repu-

tation for capacity gained by young Count—then simply called Monsieur Ferraud—made him the object of the Emperor's advances, for he was often as well pleased at his conquests among the aristocracy as at gaining a battle. The Count was promised the restitution of his title, of such of his estates as had not been sold, and he was shown in perspective a place in the ministry or as senator.

The Emperor fell.

At the time of Comte Chabert's death, M. Ferraud was a young man of six-and-twenty, without fortune, of pleasing appearance, who had had his successes, and whom the Faubourg Saint-Germain had adopted as doing it credit; but Madame la Comtesse Chabert had managed to turn her share of her husband's fortune to such good account that, after eighteen months of widowhood, she had about forty thousand francs a year. Her marriage to the young Count was not regarded as news in the circles of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Napoleon, approving of this union, which carried out his idea of fusion, restored to Madame Chabert the money falling to the Exchequer under her husband's will; but Napoleon's hopes were again disappointed. Madame Ferraud was not only in love with her lover; she had also been fascinated by the notion of getting into the haughty society which, in spite of its humiliation, was still predominant at the Imperial Court. By this marriage all her vanities were as much gratified as her passions. She was to become a real fine lady. When the Faubourg Saint-Germain understood that the young Count's marriage did not mean desertion, its drawing-rooms were thrown open to his wife.

Then came the Restoration. The Count's political advancement was not rapid. He understood the exigencies of the situation in which Louis XVIII. found himself; he was one of the inner circle who waited till the "Gulf of Revolution should be closed"—for this phrase of the King's, at which the Liberals laughed so heartily, had a political sense. The order quoted in the long lawyer's preamble at the beginning of this story had, however, put him in possession of two tracts of forest, and of an estate which had considerably increased in value during its sequestration. At the present moment, though Comte Ferraud was a Councilor of State, and a Director-General, he regarded his position as merely the first step of his political career.

Wholly occupied as he was by the anxieties of consuming ambition, he had attached to himself, as secretary, a ruined attorney named Delbecq, a more than clever man, versed in all the resources of the law, to whom he left the conduct of his private affairs. This shrewd practitioner had so well understood his position with the Count as to be honest in his own interest. He hoped to get some place by his master's influence, and he made the Count's fortune his first care. His conduct so effectually gave the lie to his former life, that he was regarded as a slandered man. The Countess, with the tact and shrewdness of which most women have a share more or less, understood the man's motives, watched him quietly, and managed him so well, that she had made good use of him for the augmentation

of her private fortune. She had contrived to make Delbecq believe that she ruled her husband, and had promised to get him appointed President of an inferior Court in some important provincial town, if he devoted himself entirely to her interests.

The promise of a place, not dependent on changes of ministry, which would allow of his marrying advantageously, and rising subsequently to a high political position, by being chosen Député, made Delbecq the Countess's abject slave. He had never allowed her to miss one of those favorable chances which the fluctuations of the Bourse and the increased value of property afforded to clever financiers in Paris during the first three years after the Restoration. He had trebled his protectress's capital, and all the more easily because the Countess had no scruples as to the means which might make her an enormous fortune as quickly as possible. The emoluments derived by the Count from the places he held she spent on the housekeeping, so as to reinvest her dividends; and Delbecq lent himself to these calculations of avarice without trying to account for her motives. People of that sort never trouble themselves about any secrets of which the discovery is not necessary to their own interests. And, indeed, he naturally found the reason in the thirst for money, which taints almost every Parisian woman; and as a fine fortune was needed to support the pretensions of Comte Ferraud, the secretary sometimes fancied that he saw in the Countess's greed a consequence of her devotion to a husband with whom she still was in love. The Countess buried the secrets of her conduct at the bottom of her heart. There lay the secrets of life and death to her, there lay the turning-point of this history.

At the beginning of the year 1818 the Restoration was settled on an apparently immovable foundation; its doctrines of government, as understood by lofty minds, seemed calculated to bring to France an era of renewed prosperity, and Parisian society changed its aspect. Madame la Comtesse Ferraud found that by chance she had achieved for love a marriage that had brought her fortune and gratified ambition. Still young and handsome, Madame Ferraud played the part of a woman of fashion, and lived in the atmosphere of the Court. Rich herself, with a rich husband who was cried up as one of the ablest men of the royalist party, and, as a friend of the King, certain to be made Minister, she belonged to the aristocracy, and shared its magnificence. In the midst of this triumph she was attacked by a moral canker. There are feelings which women guess in spite of the care men take to bury them. On the first return of the King, Comte Ferraud had begun to regret his marriage. Colonel Chabert's widow had not been the means of allying him to anybody; he was alone and unsupported in steering his way in a course full of shoals and beset by enemies. Also, perhaps, when he came to judge his wife coolly, he may have discerned in her certain vices of education which made her unfit to second him in his schemes.

A speech he made, *à propos* of Talleyrand's marriage, enlightened the Countess, to whom it proved that if he had still been a free man she would never

have been Madame Ferraud. What woman could forgive this repentance? Does it not include the germs of every insult, every crime, every form of repudiation? But what a wound must it have left in the Countess's heart, supposing that she lived in the dread of her first husband's return? She had known that he still lived, and she had ignored him. Then during the time when she had heard no more of him, she had chosen to believe that he had fallen at Waterloo with the Imperial Eagle, at the same time as Boutin. She resolved, nevertheless, to bind the Count to her by the strongest of all ties, by a chain of gold, and vowed to be so rich that her fortune might make her second marriage indissoluble, if by chance Colonel Chabert should ever reappear. And he had reappeared; and she could not explain to herself why the struggle she dreaded had not already begun. Suffering, sickness, had perhaps delivered her from that man. Perhaps he was half mad, and Charenton might yet do her justice. She had not chosen to take either Delbecq or the police into her confidence, for fear of putting herself in their power, or of hastening the catastrophe. There are in Paris many women who, like the Comtesse Ferraud, live with an unknown moral monster, or on the brink of an abyss; a callus forms over the spot that tortures them, and they can still laugh and enjoy themselves.

"There is something very strange in Comte Ferraud's position," said Derville to himself, on emerging from his long reverie, as his cab stopped at the door of the Hôtel Ferraud in the Rue de Varennes. "How is it that he, so rich as he is, and such a favorite with the King, is not yet a peer of France? It may, to be sure, be true that the King, as Mme. de Grandlieu was telling me, desires to keep up the value of the *pairie* by not bestowing it right and left. And, after all, the son of a Councilor of the *Parlement* is not a Crillon nor a Rohan. A Comte Ferraud can only get into the Upper Chamber surreptitiously. But if his marriage were annulled, could he not get the dignity of some old peer who has only daughters transferred to himself, to the King's great satisfaction? At any rate this will be a good bogy to put forward and frighten the Countess," thought he as he went up the steps.

Derville had without knowing it laid his finger on the hidden wound, put his hand on the canker that consumed Madame Ferraud.

She received him in a pretty winter dining-room, where she was at breakfast, while playing with a monkey tethered by a chain to a little pole with climbing bars of iron. The Countess was in an elegant wrapper; the curls of her hair, carelessly pinned up, escaped from a cap, giving her an arch look. She was fresh and smiling. Silver, gilding, and mother-of-pearl shone on the table, and all about the room were rare plants growing in magnificent china jars. As he saw Colonel Chabert's wife, rich with his spoil, in the lap of luxury and the height of fashion, while he, poor wretch, was living with a poor dairyman among the beasts, the lawyer said to himself—

"The moral of all this is that a pretty woman will never acknowledge as her husband, nor even as a lover, a man

in an old box-coat, a tow wig, and boots with holes in them."

A mischievous and bitter smile expressed the feelings, half philosophical and half satirical, which such a man was certain to experience—a man well situated to know the truth of things in spite of the lies behind which most families in Paris hide their mode of life.

"Good-morning, Monsieur Derville," said she, giving the monkey some coffee to drink.

"Madame," said he, a little sharply, for the light tone in which she spoke jarred on him, "I have come to speak with you on a very serious matter."

"I am so *grieved,* M. le Comte is away——"

"I, Madame, am delighted. It would be grievous if he could be present at our interview. Besides, I am informed through M. Delbecq that you like to manage your own business without troubling the Count."

"Then I will send for Delbecq," said she.

"He would be of no use to you, clever as he is," replied Derville. "Listen to me, Madame; one word will be enough to make you grave. Colonel Chabert is alive!"

"Is it by telling me such nonsense as that that you think you can make me grave?" said she with a shout of laughter. But she was suddenly quelled by the singular penetration of the fixed gaze which Derville turned on her, seeming to read to the bottom of her soul.

"Madame," he said, with cold and piercing solemnity, "you know not the extent of the danger which threatens you. I need say nothing of the indisputable authenticity of the evidence nor of the fullness of proof which testifies to the identity of Comte Chabert. I am not, as you know, the man to take up a bad cause. If you resist our proceedings to show that the certificate of death was false, you will lose that first case, and that matter once settled, we shall gain every point."

"What, then, do you wish to discuss with me?"

"Neither the Colonel nor yourself. Nor need I allude to the briefs which clever advocates may draw up when armed with the curious facts of this case, or the advantage they may derive from the letters you received from your first husband before your marriage to your second."

"It is false," she cried, with the violence of a spoilt woman. "I never had a letter from Comte Chabert; and if someone is pretending to be the Colonel, it is some swindler, some returned convict, like Coignard perhaps. It makes me shudder only to think of it. Can the Colonel rise from the dead, Monsieur? Bonaparte sent an aid-decamp to inquire for me on his death, and to this day I draw the pension of three thousand francs granted to his widow by the Government. I have been perfectly in the right to turn away all the Chaberts who have ever come, as I shall all who may come."

"Happily we are alone, Madame. We can tell lies at our ease," said he coolly, and finding it amusing to lash up the Countess's rage so as to lead her to betray herself, by tactics familiar to lawyers, who are accustomed to keep cool when their opponents or their

clients are in a passion. "Well, then, we must fight it out," thought he, instantly hitting on a plan to entrap her and show her her weakness.

"The proof that you received the first letter, Madame, is that it contained some securities——"

"Oh, as to securities—that it certainly did not."

"Then you received the letter," said Derville, smiling. "You are caught, Madame, in the first snare laid for you by an attorney, and you fancy you could fight against Justice——"

The Countess colored, and then turned pale, hiding her face in her hands. Then she shook off her shame, and retorted with the natural impertinence of such women, "Since you are the so-called Chabert's attorney, be so good as to——"

"Madame," said Derville, "I am at this moment as much your lawyer as I am Colonel Chabert's. Do you suppose I want to lose so valuable a client as you are?—But you are not listening."

"Nay, speak on, Monsieur," said she graciously.

"Your fortune came to you from M. le Comte Chabert, and you cast him off. Your fortune is immense, and you leave him to beg. An advocate can be very eloquent when a cause is eloquent in itself; there are here circumstances which might turn public opinion strongly against you."

"But, Monsieur," said the Comtesse, provoked by the way in which Derville turned and laid her on the gridiorn, "even if I grant that your M. Chabert is living, the law will uphold my second marriage on account of the children, and I shall get off with the restitution of two hundred and twenty-five thousand francs to M. Chabert."

"It is impossible to foresee what view the Bench may take of the question. If on one side we have a mother and children, on the other we have an old man crushed by sorrows, made old by your refusals to know him. Where is he to find a wife? Can the judges contravene the law? Your marriage with Colonel Chabert has priority on its side and every legal right. But if you appear under disgraceful colors, you might have an unlooked-for adversary. That, Madame, is the danger against which I would warn you."

"And who is he?"

"Comte Ferraud.'

"Monsieur Ferraud has too great an affection for me, too much respect for the mother of his children——"

"Do not talk of such absurd things," interrupted Derville, "to lawyers, who are accustomed to read hearts to the bottom. At this instant Monsieur Ferraud has not the slightest wish to annul your union, and I am quite sure that he adores you; but if someone were to tell him that his marriage is void, that his wife will be called before the bar of public opinion as a criminal——"

"He would defend me, Monsieur."

"No, Madame."

"What reason could he have for deserting me, Monsieur?"

"That he would be free to marry the only daughter of a peer of France, whose title would be conferred on him by patent from the King."

The Countess turned pale.

"A hit!" said Derville to himself. "I have you on the hip; the poor Colonel's case is won.—Besides, Madame," he

went on aloud, "he would feel all the less remorse because a man covered with glory—a General, Count, Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor—is not such a bad alternative; and if that man insisted on his wife's returning to him——"

"Enough, enough, Monsieur!" she exclaimed. "I will never have any lawyer but you. What is to be done?"

"Compromise!" said Derville.

"Does he still love me?" she said.

"Well, I do not think he can do otherwise."

The Countess raised her head at these words. A flash of hope shone in her eyes; she thought perhaps that she could speculate on her first husband's affection to gain her cause by some feminine cunning.

"I shall await your orders, Madame, to know whether I am to report our proceedings to you, or if you will come to my office to agree to the terms of a compromise," said Derville, taking leave.

A week after Derville had paid these two visits, on a fine morning in June, the husband and wife, who had been separated by an almost supernatural chance, started from the opposite ends of Paris to meet in the office of the lawyer who was engaged by both. The supplies liberally advanced by Derville to Colonel Chabert had enabled him to dress as suited his position in life, and the dead man arrived in a very decent cab. He wore a wig suited to his face, was dressed in blue cloth with white linen, and wore under his waistcoat the broad red ribbon of the higher grade of the Legion of Honor. In resuming the habits of wealth he had recovered his soldierly style. He held himself up; his face, grave and mysterious-looking, reflected his happiness and all his hopes, and seemed to have acquired youth and *impasto*, to borrow a picturesque word from the painter's art. He was no more like the Chabert of the old box-coat than a cart-wheel double sou is like a newly coined forty-franc piece. The passer-by, only to see him, would have recognized at once one of the noble wrecks of our old army, one of the heroic men on whom our national glory is reflected, as a splinter of ice on which the sun shines seems to reflect every beam. These veterans are at once a picture and a book.

When the Count jumped out of his carriage to go into Derville's office, he did it as lightly as a young man. Hardly had his cab moved off, when a smart brougham drove up, splendid with coats of arms. Madame la Comtesse Ferraud stepped out in a dress which, though simple, was cleverly designed to show how youthful her figure was. She wore a pretty drawn bonnet lined with pink, which framed her face to perfection, softening its outlines and making it look younger.

If the clients were rejuvenescent, the office was unaltered, and presented the same picture as that described at the beginning of this story. Simonnin was eating his breakfast, his shoulder leaning against window, which was then open, and he was staring up at the blue sky in the opening of the court-yard enclosed by four gloomy houses.

"Ah, ha!" cried the little clerk, "who will bet an evening at the play that

Colonel Chabert is a general, and wears a red ribbon?"

"The chief is a great magician," said Godeschal.

"Then there is no trick to play on him this time?" asked Desroches.

"His wife has taken that in hand, the Comtesse Ferraud," said Boucard.

"What next?" said Godeschal. "Is Comtesse Ferraud required to belong to two men?"

"Here she is," answered Simonnin.

At this moment the Colonel came in and asked for Derville.

"He is at home, sir," said Simonnin.

"So you are not deaf, you young rogue!" said Chabert, taking the gutter-jumper by the ear and twisting it, to the delight of the other clerks, who began to laugh, looking at the Colonel with the curious attention due to so singular a personage.

Comte Chabert was in Derville's private room at the moment when his wife came in by the door of the office.

"I say, Boucard, there is going to be a queer scene in the chief's room! There is a woman who can spend her days alternately, the old with Comte Ferraud, and the even with Comte Chabert."

"And in leap year," said Godeschal, "they must settle the *count* between them."

"Silence, gentlemen, you can be heard!" said Boucard severely. "I never was in an office where there was so much jesting as there is here over the clients."

Derville had made the Colonel retire to the bedroom when the Countess was admitted.

"Madame," he said, "not knowing whether it would be agreeable to you to meet M. le Comte Chabert, I have placed you apart. If, however, you should wish it——"

"It is an attention for which I am obliged to you."

"I have drawn up the memorandum of an agreement of which you and M. Chabert can discuss the conditions, here, and now. I will go alternately to him and to you, and explain your views respectively."

"Let me see, Monsieur," said the Countess impatiently.

Derville read aloud—

"'Between the undersigned:

"'M. Hyacinthe Chabert, Count, Maréchal de Camp, and Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor, living in Paris, Rue du Petit Banquier, on the one part;

"'And Madame Rose Chapotel, wife of the aforesaid M. le Comte Chabert, *née*——'"

"Pass over the preliminaries," said she. "Come to the conditions."

"Madame," said the lawyer, "the preamble briefly sets forth the position in which you stand to each other. Then, by the first clause, you acknowledge, in the presence of three witnesses, of whom two shall be notaries, and one the dairyman with whom your husband has been lodging, to all of whom your secret is known, and who will be absolutely silent—you acknowledge, I say, that the individual designated in the documents subjoined to the deed, and whose identity is to be further proved by an act of recognition prepared by your notary, Alexandre Crottat, is your first husband, Comte Chabert. By the second clause Comte Chabert to secure your happiness, will undertake to assert

his rights only under certain circumstances set forth in the deed.—And these," said Derville, in a parenthesis, "are none other than a failure to carry out the conditions of this secret agreement.—M. Chabert, on his part, agrees to accept judgment on a friendly suit, by which his certificate of death shall be annulled, and his marriage dissolved."

"That will not suit me in the least," said the Countess with surprise. "I will be a party to no suit; you know why."

"By the third clause," Derville went on, with imperturbable coolness, "you pledge yourself to secure the Hyacinthe Comte Chabert an income of twenty-four thousand francs on Government stock held in his name, to revert to you at his death——"

"But it is much too dear!" exclaimed the Countess.

"Can you compromise the matter cheaper?"

"Possibly."

"But what do you want, Madame?"

"I want—I will not have a lawsuit. I want——"

"You want him to remain dead?" said Derville, interrupting her hastily.

"Monsieur," said the Countess, "if twenty-four thousand francs a year are necessary, we will go to law——"

"Yes, we will go to law," said the Colonel in a deep voice, as he opened the door and stood before his wife, with one hand in his waistcoat and the other hanging by his side—an attitude to which the recollection of his adventure gave horrible significance.

"It is he," said the Countess to herself.

"Too dear!" the old soldier exclaimed. "I have given you near a million, and you are cheapening my misfortunes. Very well; now I will have you—you and your fortune. Our goods are in common, our marriage is not dissolved——"

"But Monsieur is not Colonel Chabert!" cried the Countess, in feigned amazement.

"Indeed!" said the old man, in a tone of intense irony. "Do you want proofs? I found you in the Palais Royal——"

The Countess turned pale. Seeing her grow white under her rouge, the old soldier paused, touched by the acute suffering he was inflicting on the woman he had once so ardently loved; but she shot such a venomous glance at him that he abruptly went on—

"You were with La——"

"Allow me, Monsieur Derville," said the Countess to the lawyer. "You must give me leave to retire. I did not come here to listen to such dreadful things."

She rose and went out. Derville rushed after her; but the Countess had taken wings, and seemed to have flown from the place.

On returning to his private room, he found the Colonel in a towering rage, striding up and down.

"In those times a man took his wife where he chose," said he. "But I was foolish, and chose badly; I trusted to appearances. She has no heart."

"Well, colonel, was I not right to beg you not to come?—I am now positive of your identity; when you came in, the Countess gave a little start, of which the meaning was unequivocal. But you have lost your chances. Your wife knows that you are unrecognizable."

"I will kill her!"

"Madness! you will be caught and executed like any common wretch. Besides, you might miss! That would be unpardonable. A man must not miss his shot when he wants to kill his wife.—Let me set things straight; you are only a big child. Go now. Take care of yourself; she is capable of setting some trap for you and shutting you up in Charenton. I will notify her of our proceedings to protect you against a surprise."

The unhappy Colonel obeyed his young benefactor, and went away, stammering apologies. He slowly went down the dark staircase, lost in gloomy thoughts, and crushed perhaps by the blow just dealt him—the most cruel he could feel, the thrust that could most deeply pierce his heart—when he heard the rustle of a woman's dress on the lowest landing, and his wife stood before him.

"Come, Monsieur," said she, taking his arm with a gesture like those familiar to him of old. Her action and the accent of her voice, which had recovered its graciousness, were enough to allay the Colonel's wrath, and he allowed himself to be led to the carriage.

"Well, get in!" said she, when the footman had let down the step.

And as if by magic, he found himself sitting by his wife in the brougham.

"Where to?" asked the servant.

"To Groslay," said she.

The horses started at once, and carried them all across Paris.

"Monsieur," said the Countess, in a tone of voice which betrayed one of those emotions which are rare in our lives, and which agitate every part of our being. At such moments the heart, fibers, nerves, countenance, soul, and body, everything, every pore even, feel a thrill. Life no longer seems to be within us; it flows out, springs forth, is communicated as by contagion, transmitted by a look, a tone of voice, a gesture, impressing our will on others. The old soldier started on hearing this single word, this first, terrible 'Monsieur!' But still it was at once a reproach and a pardon, a hope and a despair, a question and an answer. This word included them all; none but an actress could have thrown so much eloquence, so many feelings into a single word. Truth is less complete in its utterance; it does not put everything on the outside; it allows us to see what is within. The Colonel was filled with remorse for his suspicions, his demands, and his anger; he looked down not to betray his agitation.

"Monsieur," repeated she, after an imperceptible pause, "I knew you at once."

"Rosine," said the old soldier, "those words contain the only balm that can help me to forget my misfortunes."

Two large tears rolled hot on to his wife's hands, which he pressed to show his paternal affection.

"Monsieur," she went on, "could you not have guessed what it cost me to appear before a stranger in a position so false as mine now is? If I have to blush for it, at least let it be in the privacy of my family. Ought not such a secret to remain buried in our hearts? You will forgive me, I hope, for my apparent indifference to the woes of a Chabert in whose existence I could not possibly believe. I received your letters," she hastily added, seeing in his face the objection it expressed, "but

they did not reach me till thirteen months after the battle of Eylau. They were opened, dirty, the writing was unrecognizable; and after obtaining Napoleon's signature to my second marriage contract, I could not help believing that some clever swindler wanted to make a fool of me. Therefore, to avoid disturbing Monsieur Ferraud's peace of mind, and disturbing family ties, I was obliged to take precautions against a pretended Chabert. Was I not right, I ask you?"

"Yes, you were right. It was I who was the idiot, the owl, the dolt, not to have calculated better what the consequences of such a position might be.—But where are we going?" he asked, seeing that they had reached the barrier of La Chapelle.

"To my country house near Groslay, in the valley of Montmorency. There, Monsieur, we will consider the steps to be taken. I know my duties. Though I am yours by right, I am no longer yours in fact. Can you wish that we should become the talk of Paris? We need not inform the public of a situation, which for me has its ridiculous side, and let us preserve our dignity. You still love me," she said, with a sad, sweet gaze at the Colonel, "but have not I been authorized to form other ties? In so strange a position, a secret voice bids me trust to your kindness, which is so well known to me. Can I be wrong in taking you as the sole arbiter of my fate? Be at once judge and party to the suit. I trust in your noble character; you will be generous enough to forgive me for the consequences of faults committed in innocence. I may then confess to you: I love M. Ferraud. I believed that I had a right to love him. I do not blush to make this confession to you; even if it offends you, it does not disgrace us. I cannot conceal the facts. When fate made me a widow, I was not a mother."

The Colonel with a wave of his hand bid his wife be silent, and for a mile and a half they sat without speaking a single word. Chabert could fancy he saw the two little ones before him.

"Rosine."

"Monsieur?"

"The dead are very wrong to come to life again."

"Oh, Monseiur, no, no! Do not think me ungrateful. Only, you find me a lover, a mother, while you left me merely a wife. Though it is no longer in my power to love, I know how much I owe you, and I can still offer you all the affection of a daughter."

"Rosine," said the old man in a softened tone, "I no longer feel any resentment against you. We will forget everything," he added, with one of those smiles which always reflect a noble soul; "I have not so little delicacy as to demand the mockery of love from a wife who no longer loves me."

The Countess gave him a flashing look full of such deep gratitude that poor Chabert would have been glad to sink again into his grave at Elyau. Some men have a soul strong enough for self-devotion, of which the whole reward consists in the assurance that they have made the person they love happy.

"My dear friend, we will talk all this over later when our hearts have rested," said the Countess.

The conversation turned to other sub-

jects, for it was impossible to dwell very long on this one. Though the couple came back again and again to their singular position, either by some allusion or of serious purpose, they had a delightful drive, recalling the events of their former life together and the times of the Empire. The Countess knew how to lend peculiar charm to her reminiscences, and gave the conversation the tinge of melancholy that was needed to keep it serious. She revived his love without awakening his desires, and allowed her first husband to discern the mental wealth she had acquired while trying to accustom him to moderate his pleasure to that which a father may feel in the society of a favorite daughter.

The Colonel had known the Countess on the Empire; he found her a Countess of the Restoration.

At last, by a cross-road, they arrived at the entrance to a large park lying in the little valley which divides the heights of Margency from the pretty village of Groslay. The Countess had there a delightful house, where the Colonel on arriving found everything in readiness for his stay there, as well as for his wife's. Misfortune is a kind of talisman whose virtue consists in its power to confirm our original nature; in some men it increases their distrust and malignancy, just as it improves the goodness of those who have a kind heart.

Sorrow had made the Colonel even more helpful and good than he had always been, and he could understand some secrets of womanly distress which are unrevealed to most men. Nevertheless, in spite of his loyal trustfulness, he could not help saying to his wife—

"Then you felt quite sure you would bring me here?"

"Yes," replied she, "if I found Colonel Chabert in Derville's client."

The appearance of truth she contrived to give to this answer dissipated the slight suspicions which the Colonel was ashamed to have felt. For three days the Countess was quite charming to her first husband. By tender attentions and unfailing sweetness she seemed anxious to wipe out the memory of the sufferings he had endured, and to earn forgiveness for the woes which, as she confessed, she had innocently caused him. She delighted in displaying for him the charms she knew he took pleasure in, while at the same time she assumed a kind of melancholy; for men are more especially accessible to certain ways, certain graces of the heart or of the mind which they cannot resist. She aimed at interesting him in her position, and appealing to his feelings so far as to take possession of his mind and control him despotically.

Ready for anything to attain her ends, she did not yet know what she was to do with this man; but at any rate she meant to annihilate him socially. On the evening of the third day she felt that in spite of her efforts she could not conceal her uneasiness as to the results of her maneuvers. To give herself a minute's reprieve she went up to her room, sat down before her writing-table, and laid aside the mask of composure which she wore in Chabert's presence, like an actress who, returning to her dressing-room after a fatiguing fifth act, drops half dead,

leaving with the audience an image of herself which she no longer resembles. She proceeded to finish a letter she had begun to Delbecq, whom she desired to go in her name and demand of Derville the deeds relating to Colonel Chabert, to copy them, and to come to her at once to Groslay. She had hardly finished when she heard the Colonel's step in the passage; uneasy at her absence, he had come to look for her.

"Alas!" she exclaimed, "I wish I were dead! My position is intolerable. . . ."

"Why, what is the matter?" asked the good man.

"Nothing, nothing!" she replied.

She rose, left the Colonel, and went down to speak privately to her maid, whom she sent off to Paris, impressing on her that she was herself to deliver to Delbecq the letter just written, and to bring it back to the writer as soon as he had read it. Then the Countess went out to sit on a bench sufficiently in sight for the Colonel to join her as soon as he might choose. The Colonel, who was looking for her, hastened up and sat down by her.

"Rosine," said he, "what is the matter with you?"

She did not answer.

It was one of those glorious, calm evenings in the month of June, whose secret harmonies infuse such sweetness into the sunset. The air was clear, the stillness perfect, so that far away in the park they could hear the voices of some children, which added a kind of melody to the sublimity of the scene.

"You do not answer me?" the Colonel said to his wife.

"My husband——" said the Countess, who broke off, started a little, and with a blush stopped to ask him, "What am I to say when I speak of M. Ferraud?"

"Call him your husband, my poor child," replied the Colonel, in a kind voice. "Is he not the father of your children?"

"Well, then," she said, "if he should ask what I came here for, if he finds that I came here alone, with a stranger, what am I to say to him? Listen, Monsieur," she went on, assuming a dignified attitude, "decide my fate, I am resigned to anything——"

"My dear," said the Colonel, taking possession of his wife's hands, "I have made up my mind to sacrifice myself entirely for your happiness——"

"That is impossible!" she exclaimed, with a sudden spasmodic movement. "Remember that you would have to renounce your identity, and in an authenticated form."

"What?" said the Colonel. "Is not my word enough for you?"

The word "authenticated" fell on the old man's heart, and roused involuntary distrust. He looked at his wife in a way that made her color, she cast down her eyes, and he feared that he might find himself compelled to despise her. The Countess was afraid lest she had scared the shy modesty, the stern honesty, of a man whose generous temper and primitive virtues were known to her. Though these feelings had brought the clouds to their brow, they immediately recovered their harmony. This was the way of it. A child's cry was heard in the distance.

"Jules, leave your sister in peace," the Countess called out.

"What, are your children here?" said Chabert.

"Yes, but I told them not to trouble you."

The old soldier understood the delicacy, the womanly tact of so gracious a precaution, and took the Countess's hand to kiss it.

"But let them come," said he.

The little girl ran up to complain of her brother.

"Mamma!"

"Mamma!"

"It was Jules——"

"It was her——"

Their little hands were held out to their mother, and the two childish voices mingled; it was an unexpected and charming picture.

"Poor little things!" cried the Countess, no longer restraining her tears, "I shall have to leave them. To whom will the law assign them? A mother's heart cannot be divided; I want them, I want them."

"Are you making mamma cry?" said Jules, looking fiercely at the Colonel.

"Silence, Jules!" said the mother in a decided tone.

The two children stood speechless, examining their mother and the stranger with a curiosity which it is impossible to express in words.

"Oh, yes!" she cried. "If I am separated from the Count, only leave me my children, and I will submit to anything. . . ."

This was the decisive speech which gained all that she had hoped from it.

"Yes," exclaimed the Colonel, as if he were ending a sentence already begun in his mind, "I must return underground again. I had told myself so already."

"Can I accept such a sacrifice?" replied his wife. "If some men have died to save a mistress's honor, they gave their life but once. But in this case you would be giving your life every day. No, no. It is impossible. If it were only your life, it would be nothing; but to sign a declaration that you are not Colonel Chabert, to acknowledge yourself an impostor, to sacrifice your honor, and live a lie every hour of the day! Human devotion cannot go so far. Only think!—No. But for my poor children I would have fled with you by this time to the other end of the world."

"But," said Chabert, "cannot I live here in your little lodge as one of your relations! I am as worn out as a cracked cannon; I want nothing but a little tobacco and the *Constitutionnel*."

The Countess melted into tears. There was a contest of generosity between the Comtesse Ferraud and Colonel Chabert, and the soldier came out victorious. One evening, seeing this mother with her children, the soldier was bewitched by the touching grace of a family picture in the country, in the shade and the silence; he made a resolution to remain dead, and, frightened no longer at the authentication of a deed, he asked what he was to do to secure beyond all risk the happiness of this family.

"Do exactly as you like," said the Countess. "I declare to you that I will have nothing to do with this affair. I ought not."

Delbecq had arrived some days before, and in obedience to the Cuntess's verbal instructions, the intendant had succeeded in gaining the old soldier's confidence. So on the following morning Colonel Chabert went with the ere-

while attorney to Saint-Leu-Taverny, where Delbecq had caused the notary to draw up an affidavit in such terms that, after hearing it read, the Colonel started up and walked out of the office.

"Turf and thunder! What a fool you must think me! Why, I should make myself out a swindler!" he exclaimed.

"Indeed, Monsieur," said Delbecq, "I should advise you not to sign in haste. In your place I would get at least thirty thousand francs a year out of the bargain. Madame would pay them."

After annihilating this scoundrel *emeritus* by the lightning look of an honest man insulted, the Colonel rushed off, carried away by a thousand contrary emotions. He was suspicious, indignant, and calm again by turns.

Finally he made his way back into the park of Groslay by a gap in a fence, and slowly walked on to sit down and rest, and meditate at his ease, in a little room under a gazebo, from which the road in Saint-Leu could be seen. The path being strewn with the yellowish sand which is used instead of river-gravel, the Countess, who was sitting in the upper room of this little summer-house, did not hear the Colonel's approach, for she was too much preoccupied with the success of her business to pay the smallest attention to the slight noise made by her husband. Nor did the old man notice that his wife was in the room over him.

"Well, Monsieur Delbecq, has he signed?" the Countess asked her secretary, whom she saw alone on the road beyond the hedge of a haha.

"No, Madame. I do not even known what has become of our man. The old horse reared."

"Then we shall be obliged to put him into Charenton," said she, "since we have got him."

The Colonel, who recovered the elasticity of youth to leap the haha, in the twinkling of an eye was standing in front of Delbecq, on whom he bestowed the two finest slaps that ever a scoundrel's cheeks received.

"And you may add that old horses can kick!" said he.

His rage spent, the Colonel no longer felt vigorous enough to leap the ditch. He had seen the truth in all its nakedness. The Countess's speech and Delbecq's reply had revealed the conspiracy of which he was to be the victim. The care taken of him was but a bait to entrap him in a snare. That speech was like a drop of subtle poison, bringing on in the old soldier a return of all his sufferings, physical and moral. He came back to the summer-house through the park gate, walking slowly like a broken man.

Then for him there was to be neither peace nor truce! From this moment he must begin the odious warfare with this woman of which Derville had spoken, enter on a life of litigation, feed on gall, drink every morning of the cup of bitterness. And then—fearful thought—where was he to find the money needful to pay the cost of the first proceedings? He felt such disgust of life, that if there had been any water at hand he would have thrown himself into it; that if he had had a pistol, he would have blown out his brains. Then he relapsed into the indecision of mind which, since his conversation with Derville at the dairyman's, had changed his character.

At last, having reached the kiosk, he

went up to the gazebo, where little rose-windows afforded a view over each lovely landscape of the valley, and where he found his wife seated on a chair. The Countess was gazing at the distance, and preserved a calm countenance, showing that impenetrable face which women can assume when resolved to do their worst. She wiped her eyes as if she had been weeping, and played absently with the pink ribbons of her sash. Nevertheless, in spite of her apparent assurance, she could not help shuddering slightly when she saw before her her venerable benefactor, standing with folded arms, his face pale, his brow stern.

"Madame," he said, after gazing at her fixedly for a moment and compelling her to blush, "Madame, I do not curse you—I scorn you. I can now thank the chance that has divided us. I do not feel even a desire for revenge; I no longer love you. I want nothing from you. Live in peace on the strength of my word; it is worth more than the scrawl of all the notaries in Paris. I will never assert my claim to the name I perhaps have made illustrious. I am henceforth but a poor devil named Hyacinthe, who asks no more than his share of the sunshine.—Farewell!"

The Countess threw herself at his feet; she would have detained him by taking his hands, but he pushed her away with disgust, saying—

"Do not touch me!"

The Countess's expression when she heard her husband's retreating steps is quite indescribable. Then, with the deep perspicacity given only by utter villainy, or by fierce worldly selfishness, she knew that she might live in peace on the word and the contempt of this loyal veteran.

Chabert, in fact, disappeared. The dairyman failed in business, and became a hackney-cab driver. The Colonel, perhaps, took up some similar industry for a time. Perhaps, like a stone flung into a chasm, he went falling from ledge to ledge, to be lost in the mire of rags that seethes through the streets of Paris.

Six months after this event, Derville, hearing no more of Colonel Chabert or the Comtesse Ferraud, supposed that they had no doubt come to a compromise, which the Countess, out of revenge, had had arranged by some other lawyer. So one morning he added up the sums he had advanced to the said Chabert with the costs, and begged the Comtesse Ferraud to claim from M. le Comte Chabert the amount of the bill, assuming that she would know where to find her first husband.

The very next day Comte Ferraud's man of business, lately appointed President of the County Court in a town of some importance, wrote this distressing note to Derville:—

"Monsieur,—

"Madame la Comtesse Ferraud desires me to inform you that your client took complete advantage of your confidence, and that the individual calling himself Comte Chabert has acknowledged that he came forward under false pretenses.—Yours etc., Delbecq."

"One comes across people who are, on my honor, too, stupid by half," cried Derville. "They don't deserve to be Christians! Be humane, generous, philanthropical, and a lawyer, and you

are bound to be cheated! There is a piece of business that will cost me two thousand-franc notes!"

Some time after receiving this letter, Derville went to the Palais de Justice in search of a pleader to whom he wished to speak, and who was employed in the Police Court. As chance would have it, Derville went into Court Number 6 at the moment when the presiding magistrate was sentencing one Hyacinthe to two months' imprisonment as a vagabond, and subsequently to be taken to the Mendicity House of Detention, a sentence which, by magistrate's law, is equivalent to perpetual imprisonment. On hearing the name of Hyacinthe, Derville looked at the delinquent, sitting between two gendarmes on the bench for the accused, and recognized in the condemned man his false Colonel Chabert.

The old soldier was placid, motionless, almost absent-minded. In spite of his rags, in spite of the misery stamped on his countenance, it gave evidence of noble pride. His eyes had a stoical expression which no magistrate ought to have misunderstood; but as soon as a man has fallen into the hands of justice, he is no more than a moral entity, a matter of law or of fact, just as to statists he has become a zero.

When the veteran was taken back to the lock-up, to be removed later with the batch of vagabonds at that moment at the bar, Derville availed himself of the privilege accorded to lawyers of going wherever they please in the Courts, and followed him to the lock-up, where he stood scrutinizing him for some minutes, as well as the curious crew of beggars among whom he found himself. The passage to the lock-up at that moment afforded one of those spectacles which, unfortunately, neither legislators, nor philanthropists, nor painters, nor writers come to study. Like all the laboratories of the law, this anteroom is a dark and malodorous place; along the walls runs a wooden seat, blackened by the constant presence there of the wretches who come to this meeting-place of every form of social squalor, where not one of them is missing.

A poet might say that the day was ashamed to light up this dreadful sewer through which so much misery flows! There is not a spot on that plank where some crime has not sat, in embryo or matured; not a corner where a man has never stood who, driven to despair by the blight which justice has set upon him after his first fault, has not there begun a career at the end of which looms the guillotine or the pistol-snap of the suicide. All who fall on the pavement of Paris rebound against these yellow-gray walls, on which a philanthropist who was not a speculator might read a justification of the numerous suicides complained of by hypocritical writers who are incapable of taking a step to prevent them—for that justification is written in that ante-room, like a preface to the dramas of the Morgue, or to those enacted on the Place de la Grève.

At this moment Colonel Chabert was sitting among these men—men with coarse faces, clothed in the horrible livery of misery, and silent at intervals, or talking in a low tone, for three gen-

darmes on duty paced to and fro, their sabers clattering on the floor.

"Do you recognize me?" said Derville to the old man, standing in front of him.

"Yes, sir," said Chabert, rising.

"If you are an honest man," Derville went on in an undertone, "how could you remain in my debt?"

The old soldier blushed as a young girl might when accused by her mother of a clandestine love affair.

"What! Madame Ferraud has not paid you?" cried he in a loud voice.

"Paid me?" said Derville. "She wrote to me that you were a swindler."

The Colonel cast up his eyes in a sublime impulse of horror and imprecation, as if to call Heaven to witness to this fresh subterfuge.

"Monsieur," said he, in a voice that was calm by sheer huskiness, "get the gendarmes to allow me to go into the lock-up, and I will sign an order which will certainly be honored."

At a word from Derville to the sergeant he was allowed to take his client into the room, where Hyacinthe wrote a few lines, and addressed them to the Comtesse Ferraud.

"Send her that," said the soldier, "and you will be paid your costs and the money you advanced. Believe me, Monsieur, if I have not shown you the gratitude I owe you for your kind offices, it is not the less there," and he laid his hand on his heart. "Yes, it is there, deep and sincere. But what can the unfortunate do? They live, and that is all."

"What!" said Derville. "Did you not stipulate for an allowance?"

"Do not speak of it!" cried the old man. "You cannot conceive how deep my contempt is for the outside life to which most men cling. I was suddenly attacked by a sickness—disgust of humanity. When I think that Napoleon is at Saint Helena, everything on earth is a matter of indifference to me. I can no longer be a soldier; that is my only real grief. After all," he added with a gesture of childish simplicity, "it is better to enjoy luxury of feeling than of dress. For my part, I fear nobody's contempt."

And the Colonel sat down on his bench again.

Derville went away. On returning to his office, he sent Godeschal, at that time his second clerk, to the Comtesse Ferraud, who, on reading the note, at once paid the sum due to Comte Chabert's lawyer.

In 1840, towards the end of June, Godeschal, now himself an attorney, went to Ris with Derville, to whom he had succeeded. When they reached the avenue leading from the high road to Bicêtre, they saw, under one of the elm-trees by the wayside, one of those old, broken, and hoary paupers who had earned the Marshal's staff among beggars by living on at Bicêtre as poor women live on at la Salpêtrière. This man, one of the two thousand poor creatures who are lodged in the infirmary for the aged, was seated on a corner-stone, and seemed to have concentrated all his intelligence on an operation well known to these pensioners, which consists in drying their snuffy pocket-handkerchiefs in the sun, perhaps to save washing them. This old man had an attractive countenance. He was dressed in the reddish cloth wrapper-coat which the workhouse affords to its inmates, a

sort of horrible livery.

"I say, Derville," said Godeschal to his traveling companion, "look at that old fellow. Isn't he like those grotesque carved figures we get from Germany? And it is alive, perhaps it is happy."

Derville looked at the poor man through his eyeglass, and with a little exclamation of surprise he said—

"That old man, my dear fellow, is a whole poem, or, as the romantics say, a drama.—Did you ever meet the Comtesse Ferraud?"

"Yes; she is a clever woman, and agreeable; but rather too pious," said Godeschal.

"That old Bicêtre pauper is her lawful husband, Comte Chabert, the old Colonel She has had him sent here. no doubt. And if he is in this workhouse instead of living in a mansion, it is solely because he reminded the pretty Countess that he had taken her, like a hackney cab, on the street. I can remember now the tiger's glare she shot at him at that moment."

This opening having excited Godeschal's curiosity, Derville related the story here told.

Two days later, on Monday morning, as they returned to Paris, the two friends looked again at Bicêtre, and Derville proposed that they should call on Colonel Chabert. Halfway up the avenue they found the old man sitting on the trunk of a felled tree; with his stick in one hand, he was amusing himself with drawing lines in the sand. On looking at him narrowly, they perceived that he had been breakfasting elsewhere than at Bicêtre.

"Good-morning, Colonel Chabert," said Derville.

"Not Chabert! not Chabert! My name is Hyacinthe," replied the veteran. "I am no longer a man, I am No. 164, Room 7," he added, looking at Derville with timid anxiety, the fear of an old man and a child.—"Are you going to visit the man condemned to death?" he asked after a moment's silence. "He is not married! He is very lucky!"

"Poor fellow!" said Godeschal. "Would you like something to buy snuff?"

With all the simplicity of a street Arab, the Colonel eagerly held out his hand to the two strangers, who each gave him a twenty-franc piece; he thanked them with a puzzled look, saying—

"Brave troopers!"

He ported arms, pretended to take aim at them, and shouted with a smile—

"Fire! both arms! *Vive Napoléon!*" And he drew a flourish in the air with his stick.

"The nature of his wound has no doubt made him childish," said Derville.

"Childish! he?" said another old pauper, who was looking on. "Why, there are days when you had better not tread on his corns. He is an old rogue, full of philosophy and imagination. But today, what can you expect! He has had his Monday treat.—He was here, Monsieur, so long ago as 1820. At that time a Prussian officer, whose chaise was crawling up the hill of Villejuif, came by on foot. We two were together, Hyacinthe and I, by the roadside. The officer, as he walked, was talking to another, a Russian, or some animal of the same species, and when the Prussian saw the old boy, just to make fun, he said to him, 'Here is an old cavalryman who must have been at Rossbach.'—'I

was too young to be there,' said Hyacinthe. 'But I was at Jena.' And the Prussian made off pretty quick, without asking any more questions."

"What a destiny!" exclaimed Derville. "Taken out of the Foundling Hospital to die in the Infirmary for the Aged, after helping Napoleon between whiles to conquer Egypt and Europe.—Do you know, my dear fellow," Derville went on after a pause, "there are in modern society three men who can never think well of the world—the priest, the doctor, and the man of law? And they wear black robes, perhaps because they are in mourning for every virtue and every illusion. The most hapless of the three is the lawyer. When a man comes in search of the priest, he is prompted by repentance, by remorse, by beliefs which make him interesting, which elevate him, and comfort the soul of the intercessor whose task will bring him a sort of gladness; he purifies, repairs, and reconciles. But we lawyers, we see the same evil feelings repeated again and again, nothing can correct them; our offices are sewers which can never be cleansed.

"How many things have I learned in the exercise of my profession! I have seen a father die in a garret, deserted by two daughters, to whom he had given forty thousand francs a year! I have known wills burnt; I have seen mothers robbing their children, wives killing their husbands, and working on the love they could inspire to make the men idiotic or mad, that they might live in peace with a lover. I have seen women teaching the child of their marriage such tastes as must bring it to the grave in order to benefit the child of an illicit affection. I could not tell you all I have seen, for I have seen crimes against which justice is impotent. In short, all the horrors that romancers suppose they have invented are still below the truth. —You will know something of these pretty things; as for me, I am going to live in the country with my wife. I have a horror of Paris."

"I have seen plenty of them already in Desroches' office," replied Godeschal.

The Unconscious Mummers

To M. le Comte Jules de Castellane

Léon de Lora, the famous French landscape painter, belongs to one of the noblest families of Roussillon. The Loras came originally from Spain; and while they are distinguished for their ancient lineage, for the last century they have faithfully kept up the traditions of the hidalgo's proverbial poverty. Léon himself came up to Paris on foot from his department of the Pyrénées-Orientales with the sum of eleven francs in his pocket for all viaticum; and in some sort forgot the hardships of childhood and the poverty at home in the later hardships which a young dauber never lacks when his whole fortune consists in an intrepid vocation. Afterwards the absorbing cares brought by fame and success still further helped him to forget.

If you have followed the tortuous and

capricious course of these studies, you may perhaps recollect one of the heroes of *Un Début dans la Vie,* Schinner's pupil, Mistigris, who reappears from time to time in various Scenes.

You would not recognize the frisky, penniless dauber in the landscape painter of 1845, the rival of Hobbema, Ruysdael, and Claude Lorrain. Lora is a great man. He lives near his old master Hippolyte Schinner in a charming house (his own property) in the Rue de Berlin, not very far from the Hôtel de Brambourg, where his friend Bridau lives. He is a member of the Institut and an officer of the Legion of Honor, he has twenty thousand francs a year, his work fetches its weight in gold; and, fact even more extraordinary (as he thinks) than the invitations to Court balls which he sometimes receives—the fame of a name published abroad over Europe by the press for the last sixteen years at length reached the valley in the Pyrénées-Orientales, where three Loras of the old stock were vegetating—to wit, his elder brother, his father, and a paternal aunt, Mlle. Urraca y Lora.

On the mother's side no relatives remained to the painter save a cousin, aged fifty, living in a little manufacturing town in the department, but that cousin was the first to remember Léon. So far back as 1840 Léon de Lora received a letter from M. Sylvestre Palafox-Castel-Gazonal (usually known as plain Gazonal), to which letter Lora replied that he really was himself—that is to say, that he really was the son of the late Léonie Gazonal, wife of Comte Fernand Didas y Lora.

Upon this, in the summer of 1841, Cousin Sylvestre Gazonal went to apprise the illustrious but obscure house of Lora of the fact that young Léon had not sailed for the River Plate, nor was he dead, as they supposed; but he was one of the finest geniuses of the modern French school—which they refused to believe. The elder brother, Don Juan de Lora, told his cousin Gazonal that he, Gazonal, had been hoaxed by some Parisian wag.

Time went on, and the said Gazonal found himself involved in a lawsuit, which the prefect for the Pyrénées-Orientales summarily stopped on a question of disputed jurisdiction and transferred to the Council of State. Gazonal proposed to himself to go to Paris to watch his case, and at the same time to clear up this matter, and to call the Parisian painter to account for his impertinence. To this end, M Gazonal sallied forth from his furnished lodgings in the Rue Croix des Petits Champs, and was astonished at the sight of the palace in the Rue de Berlin; and, learning on inquiry that its owner was traveling in Italy, renounced for the time being the intention of asking him for satisfaction. His mind misgave him whether the great man would consent to own his mother's nephew.

Through 1843 and 1844 Gazonal followed the fortunes of his lawsuit. The local authorities, supported by the riparian owners, proposed to remove a weir on the river. The very existence of Gazonal's factory was threatened. In 1845 he looked on the case as lost beyond hope. The secretary of the Master of Requests, who drew up the report, told him in confidence that it was unfavorable to his claims, and his own barrister confirmed the news. Gazonal,

at home a commandant of the National Guard, and as shrewd a manufacturer as you would find in his department, in Paris felt so utterly insignificant, and found the cost of living so high, that he kept close in his shabby lodging.

The child of the South, deprived of the sun, poured maledictions upon Paris, that "rheumatism factory," as he called it; and when he came to reckon up the expenses of his stay, vowed to himself to poison the prefect or to "minotaurize" him on his return. In gloomier moments he slew the prefect outright; then he cheered up a little, and contented himself with "minotaurizing" the culprit.

One morning after breakfast, inwardly storming, he snatched the newspaper up savagely, and the following lines caught his eye at the end of a paragraph: "Our great landscape painter, Léon de Lora, returned from Italy a month ago. He is sending a good deal of his work to the Salon this year, so we may look forward to a very brilliant exhibition——" The words rang in Gazonal's ears like the inner voice which tells the gambler that he will win. With Southern impetuosity, Gazonal dashed out of the house, hailed a cab, and went to his cousin's house in the Rue de Berlin.

Léon de Lora happened to be engaged at the moment, but he sent a message asking his relative to breakfast with him next day at the Café de Paris. Gazonal, like a man of the South, poured out his woes to the valet.

Next morning, overdressed for the occasion in a coat of corn-cockle blue, with gilt buttons, a frilled shirt, white waistcoat, and yellow kid gloves, Gazonal fidgeted up and down the boulevard for an hour and a half, after learning from the *cafétier* (so provincials call the proprietor of a café) that gentlemen usually breakfasted between eleven and twelve.

"About half-past eleven," so he used to tell the story afterwards to everybody at home, "two Parisians in plain surtouts, looking like nobodies, came along the boulevard, and cried out as soon as they saw me, 'Here comes your Gazonal!——'"

The second comer was Bixiou, brought on purpose to "draw out" Léon's cousin.

"And then," he would continue, "young Léon hugged me in his arms and cried, 'Do not be cross, dear cousin; I am very much yours.'—The breakfast was sumptuous. I rubbed my eyes when I saw so many gold pieces put down on the bill. These fellows must be making their weight in gold, for my cousin gave the waiter thirty *sols*—a whole day's wages!"

Over that monster breakfast, in the course of which they consumed six dozen Ostend oysters, half a dozen cutlets *à la* Soubise, a chicken *à la* Marengo, a lobster mayonnaise, mushrooms on toast, and green peas, to say nothing of *hors d'œuvres*, washed down with three bottles of bordeaux, three of champagne, several cups of coffee and liquors, Gazonal launched forth into magnificent invective on the subject of Paris. The noble manufacturer complained of the length of the four-pound loaves, of the height of the houses, of the callous indifference towards each other displayed by the passers-by, of the cold, of the rain, of the fares charged by the "demi-fiacres"—and all so amusingly, that the pair of artists warmed towards him and asked for the story of his lawsuit.

"The histor-r-ry of my lawsuit," said he, rolling his r's and accentuating every word in Provençal fashion, "the histor-r-ry of my lawsuit is quite simple. They want my factory. I find a fool of a barrister, I give him twenty francs every time to keep his eyes open, and always find him fast asleep. He is a shell-less snail that rolls about in a carriage while I go on foot. They have swindled me shamefully; I do nothing but go from one to another, and I see that I ought to have gone in a carriage. They will not look at you here unless you hide yourself out of sight in a carriage. On the other hand, in the Council of State they are a pack of do-nothings that leave a set of little rascals in our prefect's pay to do their work for them. . . . That is the history of my lawsuit. They want my factory! *É bé!* they will get it. . . . And they can fight it out with my workpeople, a hundred strong, that will give them a cudgeling which will make them change their minds——"

"Come now, cousin, how long have you been here?" inquired the landscape painter.

"For two whole years. Oh that prefect and his 'disputed jurisdiction,' he shall pay dear for it; I will have his life, and give mine for it at the Assize Court——"

"Which councilor is chairman of your committee?"

"An ex-journalist, not worth ten *sols*, though they call him Massol."

Lora and Bixiou exchanged glances.

"And the commissioner?"

"Funnier still! It is a Master of Requests, a professor of something or other at the Sorbonne; he used to write for some review. I p-r-rofess the deepest disrespect for him——"

"Claude Vignon?" suggested Bixiou.

"That is the name—Massol and Vignon, that is the style of the unstable firm of bandits (*Trestaillons*) in league with my prefect."

"There is hope for it yet," said Léon de Lora. "You can do anything, you see, in Paris, cousin—anything, good or bad, just or unjust. Anything can be done or undone, or done over again here."

"I will be hanged if I will stop in it for another ten seconds; it is the dullest place in France."

As he spoke, the three were pacing up and down that stretch of asphalt on which you can scarcely walk of an afternoon without meeting somebody whose name has been proclaimed from Fame's trumpet, for good or ill. The ground shifts. Once it used to be the Place Royale, then the Pont Neuf possessed a privilege transferred in our day to the Boulevard des Italiens.

The landscape painter held forth for his cousin's benefit. "Paris," said he, "is an instrument which a man must learn to play. If we stop here for ten minutes, I will give you a lesson. There! look," he continued, raising his cane to point out a couple that issued from the Passage de l'Opéra.

"What is it?" inquired Gazonal.

"It" was an elderly woman dressed in a very showy gown, a faded tartan shawl, and a bonnet that had spent six months in a shop window. Her face told of a twenty years' residence in a damp porter's lodge, and her bulging market-basket showed no less clearly that the ex-portress had not improved her social position. By her side walked a slim and slender damsel. Her eyes

shaded with dark lashes, had lost their expression of innocence, her complexion was spoiled with overwork, but her features were prettily cut, her face was fresh, her hair looked thick, her brows pert and engaging, her figure lacked fullness—in two words, it was a green apple.

"It," answered Bixiou, "is a 'rat' equipped with her mother."

"A r-r-rat? *Quésaco?*"

Lén favored Mlle. Ninette with a little friendly nod.

"The 'rat' may win your lawsuit for you," he said. Gazonal started, but Bixiou had him by the arm. It had struck him as they left the café that the Southern countenance was a trifle flushed.

"The rat has just come from a rehearsal at the Opéra. It is on its way home to its scanty dinner. In three hours' time it will come back to dress, if it comes on this evening in the ballet, that is, for to-day is Monday. The rat has reached the age of thirteen; it is an old rat already. In two years' time the creature's market-price will be sixty thousand francs; she will be everything or nothing, a great dancer or a super, she will have a name in the world or she will be a common prostitute. Her working life began at the age of eight. Such as you see her to-day she is exhausted; she overtired herself this morning at the dancing class, she has just come out of a rehearsal as full of head-splitting ins and outs as a Chinese puzzle; and she will come back again to-night. The rat is one of the foundation stones of the Opéra; the rat is to the leading lady of the ballet as the little clerk is to the notary. The rat is Hope."

"Who brings the rat into the world?" asked Gazonal.

"Porters, poor folk, actors, and dancers," said Bixiou. "Nothing but the direst poverty could induce an eight-year-old child to bear such torture of feet and joints, to lead a well-conducted life till she is sixteen or eighteen years old (simply as a business speculation), and to keep a hideous old woman always with her like stable-litter about some choice plant.—You will see genius of every kind go past—artists in the bud and artists run to seed—all of them engaged in rearing that ephemereal monument to the glory of France called the Opéra; a daily renewed combination of physical and mental strength, will and genius, found nowhere but in Paris."

"I have already seen the Opéra," Gazonal remarked with a self-sufficient air.

"Yes, from your bench at three francs sixty centimes, as you have seen Paris from the Rue Croix des Petits Champs —without knowing anything about it. What did they give you at the Opéra when you went?"

"William Tell."

"Good," returned Léon, "you must have enjoyed Mathilde's great duet. Well, what do you suppose the prima donna did as soon as she went off the stage?"

"Did?—What?"

"Sat down to two mutton cutlets, underdone, which her servant had prepared for her——"

"Ah! *bouffre!*"

"Malibran kept herself up with brandy —it was that that killed her. Now for something else. You have seen the ballet: now you have just seen the ballet

go past in plain morning dress, not knowing that your lawsuit depends upon those feet?"

"My lawsuit?"

"There, cousin, there goes a *marcheuse,* as she is called."

Léon pointed out one of the superb creatures that have lived sixty years of life at five-and-twenty; a beauty so unquestioned, so certain to be sought, that she keeps in the shade. She was tall, she walked well, with a dandy's assured air, and her toilette was striking by reason of its ruinous simplicity.

"That is Carabine," said Bixiou, as he and the painter nodded slightly, and Carabine answered with a smile.

"There goes another who can cashier your prefect."

"A *marcheuse* is often a very handsome 'rat' sold by her real or pretended mother so soon as it is certain that she can neither rank as a first, nor second, nor third-rate dancer; or else she prefers her calling of *coryphée* to any other, perhaps because she has spent her youth in learning to dance and knows how to do nothing else. She met no doubt with rebuffs at the minor theaters; she cannot hope to succeed in the three French cities which maintain a *corps de ballet,* she has no money, or no wish to go abroad, for you must know that the great Paris school trains dancers for the rest of the civilized world. If a rat becomes a *marcheuse,* that is to say, a *figurante,* she must have had some weighty reason for staying in Paris—some rich man whom she did not love, that is to say, or a poor young fellow whom she loved too well. The one that passed just now will dress or undress three times in an evening as a princess. a peasant-girl, a Tyrolese, and the like, and gets perhaps two hundred francs a month."

"She is better dressed than our pr-r-refect's wife."

"If you went to call on her, you would find a maid, a cook, and a manservant in her splendid establishment in the Rue Saint-Georges," said Bixiou. "But, after all, as modern incomes are to the revenues of the eighteenth century noblesse, so is she to the eighteenth century Opéra girl, a mere wreck of former greatness. Carabine is a power in the land. At this moment she rules du Tillet, a banker with a good deal of influence in the Chamber——"

"And the higher ranks of the ballet, how about them?"

"Look!" said Lora, pointing out an elegant carriage which crossed the boulevard and disappeared down the Rue de la Grange-Batelière, "there goes one of our leading ladies of the ballet; put her name on the placards, and she will draw all Paris; she is making sixty thousand francs per annum, she lives like a princess. The price of your factory would not buy you the right of wishing her a good-morning thirty times."

"*Eh bé!* I can easily say it to myself; it will cost less."

"Do you see that good-looking young man on the front seat? He is a viscount bearing a great name, and he is her first gentleman of the chamber; he arranges with the newspapers for her; he carries peace or declares war of a morning on the manager of the Opéra; or he makes it his business to superintend the applause when she comes on or off the stage."

"My good sirs, this beats everything;

I had not a suspicion of Paris as it is."

"Oh well, at any rate you may as well find out what may be seen in ten minutes in the Passage de l'Opéra.—There!" exclaimed Bixiou.

Two persons, a man and a woman, came out as he spoke. The woman was neither pretty nor plain; there was a certain distinction that revealed the artist in the fashion and color of her gown. The man looked rather like a minor canon.

"That is a double-bass and a *second premier sujet,*" continued Bixiou. "The double-bass is a tremendous genius; but the double-bass, being a mere accessory in the score, scarcely makes as much as the dancer. The *second sujet* made a great name before Taglioni and Elssler appeared; she preserved the traditions of the character dance among us; she would have been in the first rank to-day if the other two had not come to reveal undreamed-of poetry in the dance; as it is, she is only in the second rank, and yet she draws her thirty thousand francs, and has a faithful friend in a peer of France with great influence in the Chamber. Look! here comes the third-rate dancer, a dancer that owes her (professional) existence to the omnipotent press. If her engagement had not been renewed, the men in office would have had one more enemy on their backs. The *corps de ballet* is the great power at the Opéra; for which reason, in the upper ranks of dandyism and politics, it is much better form to make a connection among the dancers than among the singers. 'Monsieur goes in for music,' is a kind of joke among the frequenters of the Opéra in the orchestra."

A short, ordinary-looking, plainly-dressed man went past.

"At last here comes the other half of the receipts—the tenor. There is no poetry, no music, no acting possible without a famous tenor that can take a certain high note. The tenor means the element of love, a voice that reaches the heart, that thrills the soul; and when this voice resolves itself into figures, it means a larger income than a cabinet minister's. A hundred thousand francs for a throat, a hundred thousand for a pair of ankles—behold the two financial scourges of the Opéra."

"It fills me with amazement to see so many hundred thousand francs walking about," said Gazonal.

"You will soon see a great deal more, dear cousin of mine. Come with us.—We will take Paris as an artist takes up the violoncello, and show you how to play the great instrument, show you how we amuse ourselves in Paris in fact."

"It is a kaleidoscope seven leagues round," cried Gazonal.

"Before we begin to pilot this gentleman, I must see Gaillard," began Bixiou.

"And Gaillard may help us in the cousin's affairs."

"What is the new scene?"

"It is not a scene, but a scene-shifter. Gaillard is a friend of ours; he has come at last to be the managing director of a newspaper; his character, like his cash-box, is chiefly remarkable for its tidal ebb and flood. Gaillard possibly may help to win your lawsuit."

"It is lost——"

"Just the time to win it then!" returned Bixiou.

Arrived at Théodore Gaillard's house in the Rue de Ménars, the friends were

informed by the footman that his master was engaged. It was a private interview.

"With whom?" inquired Bixiou.

"With a man that is driving a bargain to imprison a debtor that cannot be caught," said a voice, and a very handsome woman appeared in a dainty morning gown.

"In that case, dear Suzanne, the rest of us may walk in——"

"Oh! what a lovely creature!" cried Gazonal.

"That is Mme. Gaillard," said Léon de Lora; and, lowering his voice for his cousin's ear, he added, "You see before you, dear fellow, as modest a woman as you will find in Paris; she has retired from public life, and is contented with one husband."

"What can I do for you, my lords?" said the facetious managing director, imitating Frédéric Lemaître.

Théodore Gaillard had been a clever man; but, as so often happens in Paris, he had grown stupid with staying too long in the same groove. The principal charm of his conversation consisted in tags of quotation with which it was garnished, bits from popular plays mouthed after the manner of some well-known actor.

"We have come for a chat," said Léon.

"Encôre, jeûne hôme!" (Odry in *Les Saltimbanques.*)

"This time we shall have him for certain," said Gaillard's interlocutor by way of conclusion.

"Are you quite sure of that, Daddy Fromenteau? This is the eleventh time that we have had him fast at night, and in the morning he was gone."

"What can you do? I never saw such a debtor. He is like a locomotive, he goes to sleep in Paris and wakes up in Seine-et-Oise. He is a puzzle for a locksmith."

Seeing Gaillard smile, he added, "That is how we talk in our line. You 'nab' a man, or you lock him up; that means you arrest him. They talk differently in the criminal police. Vidocq used to say to his man, 'They have got it ready for you!' which was all the funnier because 'it' meant the guillotine."

Bixiou jogged Gazonal's elbow, and at once the visitor became all eyes and ears. "Does monsieur give palm oil?" continued Fromenteau, quite quietly, though there was a perceptible shade of menace in the tone.

"It is a matter of fifty centimes," said Gaillard (a reminiscence of Odry in *Les Saltimbanques*), as he handed over five francs to Fromenteau.

"And for the blackguards?" the man went on.

"Who are they?"

"Those in my employ," Fromenteau replied imperturbably.

"Is there anyone lower yet?" asked Bixiou.

"Oh yes, sir," the detective replied. "There are some that give us information unconsciously and get no pay for it. I put flats and noodles lower than blackguards."

"The blackguards are often very good-looking and clever," exclaimed Léon.

"Then do you belong to the police?" asked Gazonal, uneasily and curiously eyeing this little wizened, impassive person, dressed like a solicitor's under clerk.

"Which kind do you mean?" returned Fromenteau.

"Are there several kinds?"

"As many as five," said Fromenteau. "There is the Criminal Department (Vidocq used to be at the head of it); the Secret Superintendence (no one knows the chief); the Political Department (Fouché's own); and the Château, the system directly in the employ of the Emperor and Louis XVIII., and so on. The Château was always squabbling with the other department at the Quai Malaquais. That came to an end with M. Decazes. I used to belong to Louis XVIII.; I have been in the force ever since 1793 along with poor Contenson."

The listeners looked at one another, each with one thought in their minds—"How many men's heads has he cut off?"

"And now they want to do without us—tomfoolery!" added the little man that had grown so terrific all on a sudden. "Since 1830 they will only employ respectable people at the prefecture; I sent in my resignation, and learned my little knack of nabbing prisoners for debt."

"He is the right hand of the commercial police," said Gaillard, lowering his voice for Bixiou; "but you can never tell whether debtor or creditor pays him most."

"The dirtier the business, the more need for strict honesty," said Fromenteau sententiously; "I am for those that pay best. You want to recover fifty thousand francs, and you higgle over farthings. Give me five hundred francs, and to-morrow morning we will have him in quod."

"Five hundred francs for you yourself!" cried Théodore Gaillard.

"'Lisette wants a shawl,'" answered the detective, without moving a muscle of his countenance. "I call her 'Lisette' because of Béranger."

"You have a Lisette, and still you stay in your line!" cried the virtuous Gazonal.

"It is so amusing. Talk of field sports; it is far more interesting to run a man to earth in Paris!"

"They must be uncommonly clever to do it, and that is a fact," said Gazonal, thinking aloud.

"Oh, if I were to reckon up all the qualities that a man needs if he is to make his mark in our line, you would think I was describing a man of genius," replied Fromenteau, taking Gazonal's measure at a glance. "You must be lynx-eyed, must you not? Bold—for you must drop into a house like a bombshell, walk up to people as if you had known them all your life, and propose the never-refused dirty business, and so on. —You must have Memory, Sagacity, Invention—for you must be quick to think of expedients, and never repeat yourself; espionage must always be molded on the individual character of those with whom you have to do—but invention is a gift of Heaven. Then you need agility, strength, and so on. All these faculties, gentlemen, are painted up over the door of Amoros's Gymnasium as virtues. All these things we must possess under penalty of forfeiting the salary of a hundred francs per month paid us by the Government, in the Rue de Jérusalem, or the commercial police."

"And you appear to me to be a remarkable man," said Gazonal. Fromenteau looked at him, but he neither answered nor showed any sign of feeling, and went away without taking leave, an unmistakable sign of genius.

"Well, cousin, you have just seen the police incarnate," said Léon.

"I have had quite as much as I want," returned the honest manufacturer. Gaillard and Bixiou chatter together meanwhile in an undertone.

"I will send round an answer to-night to Carabine's," Gaillard said aloud; and sitting down to his desk, he took no further notice of Gazonal.

"Insolence!" fumed the child of the South on the threshold.

"His paper has twenty-two thousand subscribers," said Léon de Lora. "He is one of the great powers of the age; he has not time to be polite of a morning."

"If go we must to the Chamber to arrange this lawsuit, let us take the longest way round," said Léon.

"Great men's sayings are like silver gilt," retorted Bixiou; "use wears the gilt off the silver, and all the sparkle goes out of the sayings if they are repeated. But where are we going?"

"To see our hatter near by," returned Léon.

"Bravo! If we go on like this, we may perhaps have some fun."

"Gazonal," began Léon, "I will draw him out for your benefit. Only—you must look as solemn as a king on a five-franc piece, for you are going to see *gratis* an uncommonly queer quiz; the man's self-importance has turned his head. In these days, my dear fellow, everybody wants to cover himself with glory and a good many cover themselves with ridicule, and hence we have entirely new living caricatures——"

"When everybody is glorious together, how is a man to distinguish himself?" asked Gazonal.

"Distinguish yourself?" repeated Bixiou—"be a noodle. Your cousin wears a ribbon; I am well dressed, and people look at me, not at him."

After this remark, which may perhaps explain why so many orators and other great politicians never appear in the streets with a ribbon in their buttonholes, Léon de Lora pointed out a name painted in gilt letters over a shop front. It was the illustrious name of an author of a pamphlet on hats, a person who pays newspaper proprietors as much for advertisements as any three vendors of sugar-plums or patent pills—VITAL it ran (LATE FINOT), HAT MANUFACTURER, not plain HATTER, as heretofore.

Bixiou called Gazonal's attention to the glories of the shop window. "Vital, my dear boy, is making forty thousand francs per annum."

"And he is still in business as a hatter!" exclaimed Gazonal, nearly breaking Bixiou's arm with a violent wrench.

"You shall see the man directly," added Léon; "you want a hat, you shall have one gratis."

"Is M. Vital not in?" asked Bixiou, seeing no one at the desk.

"Monsieur is correcting proofs in his private office," said the assistant.

"What do you think of that, hey?" said Léon, turning to his cousin. Then to the assistant, "Can we speak to him without disturbing his inspirations?"

"Let the gentlemen come in," called a voice—a bourgeois voice, a voice to inspire confidence in voters, a powerful voice, suggestive of a good steady income, and Vital vouchsafed to show himself. He was dressed in black from head to foot, and carried a diamond pin in his resplendent shirt-frill. Beyond

him the three friends caught a glimpse of a young and pretty woman sitting at a desk with a piece of embroidery in her hands.

Vital was between thirty and forty years of age; native joviality had been repressed in him by ambitions. It is the privilege of a fine organization to be neither tall nor short, and Vital enjoyed that advantage. He was tolerably stout, and careful of his appearance; and if the hair had grown rather thin on his forehead, he turned the partial baldness to account, to give himself the airs of a man consumed by thought. You could see by the way that his wife looked at him that she admired her husband for a great man and a genius. Vital loved artists. Not that he had himself any taste for the arts, but he felt that he was one of the confraternity; he believe that he was an artist, and brought the fact home to you by sedulously disclaiming all right to that noble title, and constantly relegating himself to an enormous distance from the arts to draw out the remark, "Why, you have raised the manufacture of hats to the dignity of a science."

"Have you found the hat for me at last?" inquired Léon de Lora.

"What, sir, in one fortnight! A hat for *you!*" remonstrated Vital. "Why, two months will scarcely be long enough to strike out a shape to suit you! Look, here is your lithograph, there it lies. I have studied you very carefully already. I would not take so much trouble for a prince, but you are something more, you are an artist. And you understand me, my dear sir."

"Here is one of our great inventors; he would be as great a man as Jacquart if he would but consent to die for a bit," said Bixiou, introducing Gazonal. "Our friend here is a cloth weaver, the inventor of a way of restoring the indigo color in old clothes; he wanted to see you as a great phenomenon, for it was you who said, 'The hat is the man.' It sent this gentleman into ecstasies. Ah! Vital, you have faith! You believe in something; you have a passion for your work!"

Vital scarcely heard the words, his face had grown pale with joy.

"Rise, wife. This gentleman is one of the princes of science!"

Mme. Vital rose at a sign from her husband; Gazonal bowed.

"Shall I have the honor of finding a hat for you?" continued Vital, radiant and officious.

"At my price," said Bixiou.

"Quite so. I ask nothing but the pleasure of an occasional mention from you, gentlemen. Monsieur must have a picturesque hat, something in M. Lousteau's style," he continued, looking at Bixiou with the air of one laying down the law. "I will think of a shape."

"You take a great deal of trouble," said Gazonal.

"Oh! only for a few persons; only for those who can appreciate the value of the pains that I take. Why, among the aristocracy there is but one man who really understands a hat—the Prince de Béthune. How is it that men do not see, as women do, that the hat is the first thing to strike the eye? Why do they not think of changing the present state of things, which is disgraceful, it must be said. But a Frenchman, of all people, is the most persistent in his folly. I quite know the difficulties, gentlemen!

I am not speaking now of my writings on a subject which I believe I have approached in a philosophical spirit; but simply as a practical hatter I have discovered the means of individualizing the hideous headgear which Frenchmen are privileged to wear until I can succeed in abolishing it altogether."

He held up an example of the hideous modern hat.

"Behold the enemy, gentlemen. To think that the most intelligent nation under the sun should consent to put this 'stove-pipe' (as one of our own writers has said), this 'stove-pipe' upon their heads! . . . Here you see the various curves which I have introduced into those dreadful lines," he added, pointing out one of his own "creations." "Yet, although I understand how to suit the hat to the wearer—as you see, for here is a doctor's hat, this is for a tradesman, and that for a dandy or an artist, a stout man, a thin man—still, the hat in itself is always hideous. There! do you fully grasp my whole idea?"

He took up a broad-brimmed hat with a low crown.

"This is an old hat belonging to Claude Vignon, the great critic, independent writer, and free liver. . . . He has gone to the support of the ministry, he is a professor and librarian, he only writes for the *Débats* now, he has gained the post of Master of Requests. He has an income of sixteen thousand francs, he makes four thousand francs by his journalistic work, he wears a ribbon at his buttonhole.—Well, here is his new hat."

Vital exhibited a head covering, the *juste milieu* visible in every line.

"You ought to have made him a harlequin's hat," exclaimed Gazonal.

"Your genius rises over other people's heads, M. Vital," said Léon.

Vital bowed, unsuspicious of the joke.

"Can you tell me why your shops are the last of all to close here in Paris? They are open even later than the cafés and drinking bars. It really tickles my curiosity," said Gazonal.

"In the first place, our windows look their best when lighted up at night; and for one hat that we sell in the daytime, we sell five at night."

"Everything is queer in Paris," put in Léon.

"Well, in spite of my efforts and my success" (Vital pursued his panegyric), "we must come to the round crown I am working in that direction."

"What hinders you?" asked Gazonal.

"Cheapness, sir. You start with a stock of fine silk hats at fifteen francs—the price would kill the trade; Parisians never have fifteen francs of ready money to invest in a new hat. A beaver costs thirty francs, but the problem is the same as ever. Beaver, I say, though there are not ten pounds' weight of real beaver skins bought in France in a year. The article is worth three hundred and fifty francs per pound, and an ounce is needed for a hat. And besides, the beaver hat is not good for much, the skin dyes badly; it turns rusty in the sunshine in ten minutes, it subsides at once in the heat. What we call 'beaver' is really nothing but hare-skin; the best hats are made from the backs, the second quality from the sides, and the third from the bellies. I am telling you trade secrets, you are men of honor. But whether you carry beaver or hare-skin

on your head, the problem is equally insoluble—how to find fifteen or thirty francs of ready money. A man must pay cash for his hat—you behold the consequences! The honor of the garb of Gaul will be saved when a round gray hat shall cost a hundred francs. When that day comes we shall give credit, like the tailors. To that end people must be persuaded to wear the buckle, the gold galoon, the plumes, and satin-lined brims of the times of Louis XIII. and Louis XIV. Our business would expand ten times over if we went into the fancy line. France would be the hat-mart of the world, just as Paris always sets the fashion in women's dress. The present hat may be made anywhere. Ten million francs of export trade to be secured for Paris is involved in the question——"

"A revolution!" cried Bixiou, working up enthusiasm.

"Yes, a radical revolution. The form must be remodeled."

"You are happy after Luther's fashion," said Léon, always on the lookout for a pun. "You are dreaming of a reformation."

"Yes, sir. Ah! if the twelve or fifteen artists, capitalists, or dandies that set the fashion would but have courage for twenty-four hours, there would be a great commercial victory won for France. See here! as I tell my wife, I would give my fortune to succeed. Yes, it is my one ambition to regenerate the hat—and to disappear."

"The man is stupendous," remarked Gazonal, when they had left the shop, "but all your eccentrics have a touch of the South about them, I do assure you——"

"Let us go along the Rue Saint-Marc," said Bixiou.

"Are we to see something else?"

"Yes, you are going to see a money-lender—a money-lender among the 'rats' and *marcheuses*. A woman that has more hideous secrets in her keeping than gowns in her shop window," said Bixiou.

He pointed as he spoke to a dirty-looking shop like a blot on the dazzling expanse of modern street. It had last been painted somewhere about the year 1820, a subsequent bankruptcy must have left it in a dubious condition on the owner's hands, and now the color was obscured by a thick coating of grime and dust. The windows were filthy, the door handle had that significant trick of turning of its own accord, characteristic of every place which people enter in a hurry, only to leave more promptly still.

"What do you say to this? Death's cousin-german, is she not?" Léon muttered in Gazonal's ear, pointing out a terrific figure behind the counter. "She is Mme. Nourrisson."

"How much for the guipure, madame?" asked Gazonal, not to be behindhand.

"To you, monsieur, only a hundred crowns, as you come from so far." Then remarking a certain Southern start of surprise, she added, with a touch of pathos in her voice, "It belonged to the Princesse de Lamballe, poor thing."

"What! here! right under the Tuileries?" cried Bixiou.

"Monsieur, 'they' don't believe it," said she.

"We did not come here as buyers, madame," Bixiou began valiantly.

"So I see, monsieur," retorted Mme. Nourrisson.

"We have several things to sell," con-

tinued the illustrious caricaturist. "I live at No. 112 Rue de Richelieu, sixth floor. If you like to look in, in a moment, you may pick up a famous bargain——"

"Perhaps monsieur would like a bit of muslin; it is very much worn just now?" smiled she.

"No. It is a matter of a wedding-dress," Léon de Lora said with much gravity.

Fifteen minutes later, Mme. Nourrisson actually appeared at Bixiou's rooms. Léon and Gazonal had come home with him to see the end of the jest, and Mme. Nourrisson found the trio looking as sober as three authors whose work (written in collaboration) has not met with that success which it deserved.

Bixiou unblushingly produced a pair of lady's slippers. "These, madame, belonged to the Empress Josephine," said he, giving Mme. Nourrisson, as in duty bound, the small change for her Princesse de Lamballe.

"*That?* . . ." cried she. "Why it was new this year; look at the mark on the sole."

"Can you not guess that the pair of slippers is a prelude to the romance," said Léon; "and not, as usual, the sequel?"

"My friend here from the South," put in Bixiou, "wishes to marry a certain young lady, very well-to-do and well connected; but he would like to know beforehand (huge family interests being at stake) whether there has been any slip in the past."

"How much is monsieur willing to pay?" she asked, eyeing the prospective bridegroom.

"A hundred francs," said Gazonal, no longer astonished at anything.

"Many thanks," said she, with a grimace which a monkey might despairingly envy.

"Come, now, how much do you want, Mme. Nourrisson?" asked Bixiou, putting his arm round her waist.

"First of all, my dear gentlemen, never since I have been in business have I seen anyone, man or woman, beating down the price of happiness. And, in the second place, you are all three of you chaffing me," she added, and a smile that stole over her hard lips was reënforced by a gleam of cat-like suspicion in her eyes. "Now, if your happiness is not involved, your fortune is at stake, and a man that lives up so many pairs of stairs is still less the person to haggle over a rich match.—Come, now, what is it all about, my lambs?" with sudden affability.

"We want to know about the firm of Beunier and Company," said Bixiou, very well pleased to pick up some information concerning a person in whom he was interested.

"Oh! a louis will be enough for that——"

"And why?"

"I have all the mother's jewels. She is hard up from one quarter to another; why, it is all she can do to pay interest on the money she owes me. Are you looking for a wife in that quarter? You noodle! Hand me over forty francs, and I will give you a good hundred crowns' worth of gossip."

Gazonal brought a forty-franc piece to light, and Mme. Nourrisson gave them some startling stories of the straits to which some so-called ladies are reduced. The old wardrobe-dealer grew lively as she talked, sketching her own portrait

in the course of the conversation. Without betraying a single confidence, without letting fall a single name, she made her audience shudder by allowing them to see how much prosperity in Paris is based on the quaking foundation of borrowed money. In her drawers she had keepsakes set in gold and brilliants, memorials of grandmothers long dead and gone, of children still in life, of husbands or grand-children laid in the grave. She had heard ghastly stories wrung from anger, passion, or pique, told, it may be, by one customer of another, or drawn from borrowers in the necessary course of sedative treatment which ends in a loan.

"Why did you enter this line of business?" asked Gazonal.

"For my son's sake," she replied simply.

Women that go up and down back stairs to ply their trade are always brimful of excuses based on the best of motives. Mme. Nourrisson, by her own account, had lost three matches, three daughters that turned out very badly, and all her illusions to boot. She produced pawn-tickets for some of her best goods, she said, just to show the risks of the trade. How she should meet the end of the month, she did not know; people "robbed" her to such a degree.

The word was a little too strong. The artists exchanged glances.

"Look here, boys, I will just show you how we get taken in. This did not happen to me, but to my neighbor over the way, Mme. Mahuchet, a ladies' shoemaker. I had been lending money to a Countess, a woman with more crazes than she can afford. She swaggers it with a fine house and grand furniture; she has At Homes, she makes a deuce of a dash.

"Well, she owed her shoemaker three hundred francs, and was giving a dinner and a party no further back than the day before yesterday. Mme. Mahuchet, hearing of this from the cook, came to me about it, and we got excited over the news. She was for making a fuss, but for my own part—'My dear Mother Mahuchet,' I said, 'where is the use of it? Just to get a bad name; it is better to get good security. It is diamond cut diamond, and you save your bile.'—But go she would; she asked me to back her up, and we went together.—'Madame is not at home,'—'Go on!' said Mother Mahuchet. 'We will wait for her if I stop her till midnight!'—So we camped down in the antechamber and chatted together. Well, doors opened and shut; by and by there was a sound of little footsteps and low voices; and, for my own part, I felt sorry the company was coming to dinner. You can judge of the turn things took.

"The Countess sent in her own woman to wheedle La Mahuchet—'You shall be paid to-morrow'—and all the rest of the ways of trying it on.—No go.—Then the Countess, in her Sunday best, as you may say, comes into the dining-room. La Mahuchet hears her, flings open the door, and walks in. Lord! at the sight of the dinner-table, all sparkling like a jewel-case, the dish-covers and the plate and the candle-sconces, she went off like a soda-water bottle. She flings out her bomb—'Those that spend other people's money have no business to give dinner-parties; they ought to live quietly. You a Countess! and you owe a hundred crowns to a poor shoemaker's wife with

seven children!'—You can imagine how she ran on, an uneducated woman as she is. At the first word of excuse—'No money'—from the Countess, La Mahushet cries out, 'Eh, my lady, but there is silver-plate here! Pawn your spoons and forks and pay me!'—'Take them yourself,' says the Countess, catching up half a dozen and slipping them into her hand, and we hurried away downstairs pellmell.—What a success! Bah! no. Out in the street tears came into La Mahuchet's eyes, she is a good soul; she took the things back, and apologized. She found out the depths of the Countess's poverty—they were German silver!"

"Dishcovered that she had no cover," commented Léon de Lora, in whom the Mistigris of old was apt to reappear.

The pun flashed a sudden light across Mme. Nourrisson's brain. "Aha! my dear sir, you are an artist, a dramatic writer, you live in the Rue du Helder, you have kept company with Mme. Antonia, I know a few of your little ways! . . . Come, now, do you want something out of the common in the grand style, Carabine or Mousqueton, for instance, or Malaga or Jenny Cadine?"

"Malaga and Carabine, forsooth! when we have made them what they are!" cried Léon.

"My dear Mme. Nourrisson, I solemnly swear to you that we wanted nothing but the pleasure of making your acquaintance; and as we wish to hear about your antecedents, we should like to know how you came to drop into your way of business," said Bixiou.

"I was a confidential servant in the household of a Marshal of France," she said, posing like a Dorine; "he was the Prince d'Ysembourg. One morning one of the finest ladies at the Emperor's court came to speak privately with the Marshal. I took care at once to be within hearing. Well, my Countess bursts into tears, and tells that simpleton of a Marshal (the Prince d'Ysembourg, the Condé of the Republic, and a simpleton to boot), she tells him that her husband was away at the wars in Spain, and had left her without a single note for a thousand francs, and that unless she can have one or two at once, her children must starve, she had literally nothing for to-morrow. Well, my Marshal, being tolerably free-handed in those days, takes a couple of thousand-franc notes out of his desk.—I watched the fair Countess down the stairs. She did not see me; she was laughing to herself with not altogether motherly glee, so I slipped out and heard her tell the *chasseur* in a low voice to drive to Leroy's. I rushed round. My mother of a family goes to the famous shop in the Rue de Richelieu—you know the place—and orders and pays for a dress that cost fifteen hundred francs. You used to pay for one dress by ordering another then. Two nights afterwards she could appear at the ambassador's ball, decked out as a woman must be when she wishes to shine for all the world and for one besides. That very day said I to myself, 'Here is an opening for me! When I am no longer young, I will lend money to fine ladies on their things; passion cannot reckon, and pays blindly.' If it is a subject for a comedy that you want, I will let you have some for a consideration——"

And making an end of a harangue colored by all the phases of her past

life, she departed, leaving Gazonal in dismay, caused partly by the matter of her discourse, but at least as much by an exhibition of five yellow teeth which she meant for a smile.

"What are we to do next?" he inquired.

"Find some banknotes," said Bixiou, whistling for his porter; "I want money, and I am going to teach you the uses of a porter. You imagine that they are meant to open doors; whereas their real use is to help vagrants like me out of difficulties, and to assist the artists whom they take under their protection, for which reason mine will take the Montyon prize some of these days."

The common expression, "eyes like saucers," found sufficient illustration in Gazonal's countenance at that moment.

The man that suddenly appeared in the doorway was of no particular age, a something between a private detective and a merchant's clerk, but more unctuous and sleeker than either; his hair was greasy, his person paunchy, his complexion of the moist and unwholesome kind that you observe in the superiors of convents. He wore a blue cloth jacket, drab trousers, and list slippers.

"What do you want, sir?" inquired this personage, with a half-patronizing, half-servile manner.

"Oh, Ravenouillet—(his name is Ravenouillet," said Bixiou, turning to Gazonal)—"have you your 'bills receivable' about you?"

Ravenouillet felt in a side-pocket, and produced the stickiest book that Gazonal had ever seen in his life.

"Just enter a note of these two bills for five hundred francs at three months, and put your name to them for me."

Bixiou brought out a couple of notes made payable to his order as he spoke. Ravenouillet accepted them forthwith, and noted them down on the greasy page among his wife's entries of various sums due from other lodgers.

"Thanks, Ravenouillet. Stay, here is an order for the Vaudeville."

"Ah, my child will enjoy herself very much to-night," said Ravenouillet, as he went away.

"There are seventy-one of us in the house," said Bixiou; "among us, on an average, we owe Ravenouillet six thousand francs per month, eighteen thousand francs per quarter for advances and postage, to say nothing of rent. He is our Providence—at thirty per cent. We pay him that without being so much as asked."

"Oh, Paris! Paris!" exclaimed Gazonal.

"On the way," said Bixiou, filling in his signature "(for I am going to show you another actor, Cousin Gazonal, and a charming scene he shall play, *gratis*, for you)——"

"Where?" Gazonal broke in.

"In a money-lender's office. On the way, I repeat, I will tell you how friend Ravenouillet started in Paris."

As they passed the door of the lodge, Gazonal heard Mlle. Lucienne Ravenouillet, a student at the Conservatoire, practicing her scales, her father was reading the newspaper, and Mme. Ravenouillet came out with letters in her hand for the lodgers above.

"Thank you, M. Bixiou," called the little one.

"That is not a 'rat,'" said Léon; "it is a grasshopper in the larva state."

"It seems that here, as all the world

over, you win the favor of those in office by good offices," began Gazonal. Léon was charmed with the pun.

"He is coming on in our society!" he cried.

"Now for Ravenouillet's history," said Bixiou, when the three stood outside on the boulevard. "In 1831 Massol (your chairman of committee, Gazonal) was a journalist barrister. At that time he merely intended to be Keeper of the Seals some day; he scorned to oust Louis-Philippe from the throne: pardon his ambition, he comes from Carcassonne. One fine morning a young fellow-countryman turned up.—'*Monsu* Massol,' he said, 'you know me very well, my father is your neighbor the grocer; I have just come from down yonder, for they tell us that everyone who comes here gets a place.' At those words a cold shiver ran through Massol. He thought within himself that if he were so ill advised as to oblige a compatriot, who for that matter was a perfect stranger, he should have the whole department tumbling in upon him. He thought of the wear and tear to bell-pulls, door hinges, and carpets, he saw his only servant giving notice, he had visions of trouble with his landlord, of complaints from the other tenants of the combined odors of garlic and *diligence* introduced into the house. So he fixed upon his petitioner such an eye as a butcher turns upon a sheep brought into the shambles. In vain. His fellow-countryman survived that gaze, or rather that stab, and continued his discourse much on this wise, according to Massol's report of it:—

"'I have my ambitions, like everyone else.' said he: 'I shall not go back again until I am rich, if indeed I go back at all, for Paris is the antechamber of Paradise. They tell me that you write for the newspapers, and do anything you like with people here, and that for you it is ask and have with the Government. I have abilities, like all of us down yonder, but I know myself: I have no education; I cannot write (which is a pity, for I have ideas); so I do not think of coming into competition with you; I know myself; I should not making anything out. But since you can do anything, and we are brothers, as you may say, having played together as children, I count upon you to give me a start in life, and to use your influence for me.—Oh, you must. I want a place, the kind of place to suit my talents, a place that I, being I, am fitted to fill with a chance of making my fortune——'

"Massol was just on the point of brutally thrusting his fellow-countryman out at the door with a rough word in his ear, when the said countryman concluded thus:—

"'So I do not ask for a place in the civil service, where a man gets on as slowly as a tortoise, for there is your cousin that has been a tax-collector these twenty years, and is a tax-collector still—no; I simply thought of going——'

—'On the stage?' put in Massol, greatly relieved by the turn things were taking.—'No. It is true, I have the figure for it, and the memory, and the gesticulation; but it takes too much out of you. I should prefer the career of a—porter.' Massol kept his countenance—'It will take far more out of you,' he said, 'but you are not so likely, at any rate, to perform to an empty house.'—

So he found Ravenouillet's 'first-door-string' for him, as he says."

"I was the first to take an interest in porters as a class," said Léon. "Your moral humbugs, your charlatans from vanity, your latter-day sycophants, your Septembrists disguised in trappings of decorous solemnity, your discoverers of problems palpitating with present importance, are all preaching the emancipation of the negro, the improvement of the juvenile offender, and philanthropic efforts on behalf of the ticket-of-leave man; while they leave their porters in a worse plight than the Irish, living in dens more loathsome than dark cells, upon a scantier pittance than the Government grant per head for convicts. I have done but one good deed in my life, and that is my porter's lodge."

"Yes," said Bixiou. "Suppose that a man has built a set of huge cages, divided up like a beehive or a menagerie into hundreds of cells or dens, in which living creatures of every species are intended to ply their various industries; suppose that this animal, with the face of an owner of house-property, should come to a man of science and say—'Sir, I want a specimen of the order *Bimana*, which shall live in a sink ten feet square, filled with old boots and plague-stricken rags. I want him to live in it all his life, and rear a family of children as pretty as cerubs; he must use it as a workshop, kitchen, and promenade; he must sing and grow flowers in it, and never go out; he must shut his eyes, and yet see everything that goes on in the house.'—Assuredly the man of science could not invent the Porter; Paris alone, or the Devil if you like to have it so, was equal to the feat."

"Parisian industrialism has gone even further into the regions of the Impossible," added Gazonal. "You in Paris exhibit all kinds of manufactures; but there are by-products of which you know nothing. . . . There are your working classes.—They bear the brunt of competition with foreign industries, hardship against hardship, just as the regiments bore in the brunt of Napoleon's duel with Europe."

"Here we are. This is where our friend Vauvinet lives," said Bixiou. "People who paint contemporary manners are too apt to copy old portraits; it is one of their greatest mistakes. In our own times every calling has been transformed. Tradesmen are peers of France, artists are capitalists, writers of vaudevilles have money in the Funds. Some few figures remain as before; but, generally speaking, most professions have dropped their manners and customs along wit htheir distinctive dress. Gobseck, Gigonnet, Chaboisseau, and Samanon were the last of the Romans; to-day we rejoice in the possession of our Vauvinet, the good fellow, the dandy-denizen of the greenroom, the frequenter of the society of *lorettes*, the owner of a neat little one-horse brougham. Watch my man carefully, friend Gazonal, and you shall see a comedy of money. First, the cool, indifferent man that will not give a penny; and second, the hot and eager man smelling a profit. Of all things, listen to him."

With that, the three mounted to a second-floor lodging in a very fine house on the Boulevard des Italiens, and at once found themselves amid elegant surroundings in the height of the fashion.

A young man of eight-and-twenty, or thereabouts, came forward almost laughingly at sight of Léon de Lora, held out a hand to all appearance in the friendliest possible way to Bixiou, gave Gazonal a distant bow, and brought the three into his private office. All the man's bourgeois tastes lurked beneath the artistic decorations of the room in spite of the unimpeachable statuettes and numberless trifles appropriated to the uses of *petits appartements* by modern art, grown petty to supply the demand. Like most young men of business, Vauvinet was extremely carefully dressed, a man's clothes being as it were a kind of prospectus among them.

"I have come to you for money," said Bixiou, laughing as he held out his bills.

Vauvinet's countenance immediately grew so grave that Gazonal was amused at the difference between the smiles of a minute ago and the professional bill-discounting visage he turned on Bixiou.

"I would oblige you with the greatest pleasure, my dear fellow," said he, "but I have no cash at the moment."

"Oh, pshaw!"

"No. I have paid it all away, you know where. Poor old Lousteau is going to run a theater. He has gone into partnership with an ancient playwright that stands very well with the ministry—Ridal, his name is—they wanted thirty thousand francs of me yesterday. I am drained dry, so dry indeed that I am just about to borrow a hundred louis of Cérizet to pay for my losses this morning at lansquenet, at Jenny Cadine's."

"You must be drained dry indeed if you cannot oblige poor Bixiou," put in Léon de Lora, "for he can say very nasty things when he is driven to it——"

"I can only speak well of a man so well off," said Bixiou.

"My dear fellow, even if I had the money, it would be quite impossible to discount bills accepted by your porter, even at fifty per cent. There is no demand for Ravenouillet's paper. He is not exactly Rothschild. I warn you that this sort of thing is played out. You ought to try another firm. Look up an uncle, for the friend that will back your bills is extinct, materialism is so frightfully on the increase——"

Bixiou turned to Gazonal.

"I have a friend here," he said, "one of the best known cloth manufacturers in the South. His name is Gazonal. His hair wants cutting," continued Bixiou, surveying the provincial's luxuriant and somewhat disheveled crop; "but I am just about to take him to Marius, and his resemblance to a poodle, so deleterious to his credit and ours, will presently disappear."

"A Southern name is not good enough for me, without offense to this gentleman be it said," returned Vauvinet, and Gazonal was so much relieved that he passed over the insolence of the remark. Being extremely acute, he thought that Bixiou and the painter meant to make him pay a thousand francs for the breakfast at the Café de Paris by way of teaching him to know the town. He had not yet got rid of the suspicion in which the provincial always intrenches himself.

"How should I do business in the Pyrenees, six hundred miles away?" added Vauvinet.

"So there is no more to be said?" returned Bixiou.

"I have twenty francs at home."

"I am sorry for you," said the author of the hoax. "I thought I was worth a thousand francs," he added dryly.

"You are worth a hundred thousand francs," Vauvinet rejoined; "sometimes you are even beyond all price—but I am drained dry."

"Oh, well, we will say no more about it. I had contrived as good a bit of business as you could wish at Carabine's to-night—do you know?"

Vauvinet's answer was a wink. So does one dealer in horse-flesh convey to another the information that he is not to be deceived.

"You have forgotten how you took me by the waist, exactly as if I were a pretty woman, and said with coaxing words and looks, 'I will do anything for you, if only you will get me shares at par in this railway that du Tillet and Nucingen are bringing out,' said you. Very well, my dear fellow, Maxime and Nucingen are coming to-night to meet several political folk at Carabine's. You are losing a fine chance, old man. Come. Good-day, dabbler."

And Bixiou rose to go, leaving Vauvinet to all appearance indifferent, but in reality as vexed as a man can be with himself after a blunder of his own making.

"One moment, my dear fellow. I have credit if I have no cash. If I can get nothing for your bills, I can keep them till they fall due, and give you other bills in exchange from my portfolio. After all, we might possibly come to an understanding about those railway shares; we could divide the profits in a certain proportion, and I would give you a draft on myself on account of the prof——"

"No, no," returned Bixiou, "I must have money; I must cash my Ravenouillet elsewhere——"

"And Ravenouillet is a good man," resumed Vauvinet; "he has an account at the savings bank; a very good man——"

"Better than you are," said Léon; "he has no rent to pay, he does not squander his money on *Lorettes,* nor does he rush into speculation and shake in his shoes with every rise and fall."

"You are pleased to laugh, great man. You have given us the quintessence of La Fontaine's fable of the *Oak and the Reed,*" said Vauvinet, grown jovial and insinuating all at once.—"Come, Gubetta, my old fellow conspirator," he continued, taking Bixiou by the waist, "you want money, do you? Very well, I may just as well borrow three as two thousand francs of my friend Cérizet. And 'Cinna, let us be friends!' . . . Hand us over those two leaves that grow from the root of all evil. If I refused at first, it was because it is very hard on a man that can only do his bit of business by passing on bills to the Bank to make him keep your Ravenouillets locked up in the drawer of his desk. It is hard; very hard——"

"What discount?"

"Next to nothing," said Vauvinet. "At three months it will cost you a miserable fifty francs."

"You shall be my benefactor, as Émile Blondet used to say."

"It is borrowing money at twenty per cent per annum, interest included——" Gazonal began in a whisper, but for all

answer he received a blow from Bixiou's elbow directed at his windpipe.

"I say," said Vauvinet, opening a drawer, "I perceive an odd note for five hundred francs sticking to the cloth. I did not know I was so rich. I was looking for a bill to offer you. I have one almost due for four hundred and fifty. Cérizet will take it off you for a trifle; and that makes up the amount. But no tricks, Bixiou. I am going to Carabine's to-night, eh? Will you swear——?"

"Are we not friends again?" asked Bixiou, taking the banknote and the bill. "I give you my word of honor that you shall meet du Tillet to-night and plenty of others that have a mind to make their (rail)way."

Vauvinet came out upon the landing with the three friends, cajoling Bixiou to the last.

Bixiou listened with much seriousness while Gazonal on the way downstairs tried to open his eyes to the nature of the transaction just completed. Gazonal proved to him that if Cérizet, this crony of Vauvinet's, charged no more than twenty francs for discounting a bill for four hundred and fifty francs, then he (Bixiou) was borrowing money at the rate of forty per cent per annum.

Out upon the pavement Bixiou burst into a laugh, the laugh of a Parisian over a successful hoax, a soundless, joyless chuckle, a labial north-easter which froze Gazonal into silence.

"The grant of the concession to the railway will be postponed at the Chamber," he said; "we knew that yesterday from the *marcheuse* whom we met just now. And if I win five or six thousand francs at lansquenet, what is a loss of sixty or seventy francs so long as you have something to stake?"

"Lansquenet is another of the thousand facets of Paris life to-day," said Léon. "Wherefore, cousin, count upon our introducing you to one of the duchesses of the Rue Saint-Georges. In her house you see the aristocracy of *lorettes*, and may perhaps gain your lawsuit. But you cannot possibly show yourself with that Pyrenean crop, you look like a hedgehog; we will take you to Marius, close by in the Place de la Bourse. He is another of our mummers."

"What is the new mummer?"

"Here comes the anecdote," said Bixiou. "In 1800 a young wigmaker named Cabot came from Toulouse, and set up show (to use your jargon) in Paris. This genius—he retired afterward with an income of twenty thousand francs to Libourne—this genius, consumed with ambition, saw that the name of Cabot could never be famous. M. Parny, whom be attended professionally, called him Marius, a name infinitely superior to the 'Armands' and 'Hippolytes' beneath which other victims of that hereditary complaint endeavor to conceal the patronymic. All Cabot's successors have been named Marius. The present Marius is Marius V.; his family name is Mougin. This is the way with many trades, with *Eau de Botot* for example, and La Petite-Vertu's ink. In Paris a man's name becomes a part of the business, and at length confers a certain status; the signboard ennobles. Marius left pupils behind him, too, and created (it is said) the first school of hair dressing in the world."

"I noticed before this as I traveled

across France a great many names upon signboards—So-and-so, *from Marius.*"

"All his pupils are bound to wash their hands after each customer," continued Bixiou; "and Marius will not take everyone, a pupil must have a shapely hand and tolerable good looks. The most remarkable of these, for figure or eloquence, are sent out to people's houses; Marius only puts himself about for titled ladies. He has a cab and a 'groom.'"

"But, after all, he is only a barber (*merlan*)," Gazonal cried indignantly.

"A barber!" repeated Bixiou. "You must know that he is a captain in the National Guard, and wears the Cross because he was the first to leap a barricade in 1832."

"Be careful. He is neither a hairdresser nor a wigmaker; he is the manager of *salons de coiffure,*" said Léon on the sumptuously carpeted staircase between the mahogany handrails and cut-glass balusters.

"And, look here, do not disgrace us," added Bixiou. "The lackeys in the antechamber will take off your coat and hat to brush them, open the door of the salon and close it after you. Which is worth knowing, my friend Gazonal," Bixiou continued slyly, "or you might cry 'Thieves!'"

"The three salons are three boudoirs," said Léon; "the manager has filled them with all that modern luxury can devise. There are fringed lambrequins over the windows, flower-stands everywhere, and silken couches, on which you await your turn and read the newspapers if all the dressing-rooms are occupied. As you come in, you begin to finger your waistcoat pockets, and imagine that they will charge you five francs at least; but no pocket is mulcted of more than half a franc if the hair is curled, or a franc if the hairdresser cuts it. Elegant toilet-tables stand among the flowers, there are jets of water playing, you see yourself reflected everywhere in huge mirrors. So try to look as if you were used to it. When the client comes in (Marius uses the elegant term 'client' instead of the common word 'customer'), when the client appears on the threshold, Marius appraises him at a glance; for him you are 'a head' more or less worthy of his interest. From Marius's point of view, there are no men—only heads."

"We will tune Marius to concert-pitch for you," said Bixiou, "if you will follow our lead."

When Gazonal appeared upon the scenes, Marius at once gave him an approving glance. "Regulus!" cried he, "take this head. Clip with the small shears first of all."

At a sign from Bixiou, Gazonal turned to the pupil. "Pardon me," he said, "I wish to have M. Marius himself."

Greatly flattered by this speech, Marius came forward, leaving the head on which he was engaged.

"I am at your service, I am just at an end. Be quite easy, my pupil will prepare you, I myself will decide on the style."

Marius, a little man, his face seamed with the smallpox, his hair frizzed after Rubini's fashion, was dressed in black from head to foot. He wore white cuffs and a diamond in his shirt-frill. He recognized Bixiou, and saluted him as an equal power.

"A commonplace head," he remarked

to Leon, indicating the subject under his fingers, "a philistine. But what can one do? If one lived by art alone, one would end raving mad at Bicêtre." And he returned to his client with an inimitable gesture and a parting injunction to Regulus, "Be careful with that gentleman, he is evidently an artist."

"A journalist," said Bixiou.

At that word Marius passed the comb two or three times over the "commonplace head," swooped down upon Gazonal just as the small shears were brought into play, and caught Regulus by the arm with—

"I will take this gentleman.—Look, see yourself in the large mirror, sir (if the glass can stand it)," he said, addressing the relinquished philistine.—"Ossian!"

A lackey came in and carried off the "client."

"Pay at the desk, sir," said Marius as the bewildered customer drew out his purse.

"Is it any use, my dear fellow, to proceed to this operation with the small shears?" asked Bixiou.

"A head never comes under my hands until it has been brushed," said the great man; "but on your account I will take this gentleman from beginning to end. The blocking out I leave to my pupils, I do not care to take it. Everybody, like you, is for 'M. Marius himself'; I can only give the finishing touches. For what paper does monsieur write?"

"In your place I would have three or four editions of Marius."

"Ah! monsieur is a feuilletoniste, I see," said Marius. "Unluckily, a hairdresser must do his work himself, it cannot be done by a deputy. . . . Pardon me."

He left Gazonal to give an eye to Regulus, now engaged with a newly arrived head, and made a disapproving comment thereon, an inarticulate sound produced by tongue and palate, which may be rendered thus—"titt, titt, titt."

"Goodness gracious! come now, that is not broad enough, your scissors are leaving furrows behind them. . . . Stay a bit; look here, Regulus, you are not clipping poodles, but *men*—men with characters of their own; and if you continue to gaze at the ceiling instead of dividing your attention between the glass and the face, you will be a disgrace to 'my house.'"

"You are severe, M. Marius."

"I must do my duty by them, and teach them the mysteries of the art——"

"Then it is an art, is it?"

Marius stopped in indignation, the scissors in one hand, the comb in the other, and contemplated Gazonal in the glass.

"Monsieur, you talk like a —— child. And yet, from your accent, you seem to come from the South, the land of men of genius."

"Yes. It requires taste of a kind, I know," returned Gazonal.

"Pray say no more, monsieur! I looked for better things from you. I mean to say that a hairdresser (I do not say a *good* hairdresser, for one is either a hairdresser or one is not), a hairdresser is not so easily found as—what shall I say?—as—I really hardly know—as a Minister—(sit still) no, that will not do, for you cannot judge of the value of a Minister, the streets are full of them.—A Paganini?—no, that

will not quite do.—A hairdresser, monsieur, a man that can read your character and your habits, must have that in him which makes a philosopher. And for the women! But there, women appreciate us, they know our value; they know that their triumphs are due to us when they come to us to prepare them for conquest . . . which is to say that a hairdresser is—but no one knows what he is. I myself, for instance, you will scarcely find a—well, without boasting, people know what I am. Ah! well, no, I think there should be a better yet. . . . Execution, that is the thing! Ah, if women would but give me a free hand; if I could but carry out all the ideas that occur to me!—for I have a tremendous imagination, you see—but women will not coöperate with you, they have notions of their own, they *will* run their fingers or their combs through the exquisite creations that ought to be engraved and recorded, for our works only live for a few hours, you see, sir! Ah! a great hairdresser should be something like what Carême and Vestris are in their lines.—(Your head this way, if you please, I am catching the expression. That will do.)—Bunglers, incapable of understanding their epoch or their art, are the ruin of our profession.—They deal in wigs, for instance, or hair-restorers, and think of nothing but selling you a bottle of stuff, making a trade of the profession; it makes one sorry to see it. The wretches cut your hair and brush it anyhow. Now, when I came here from Toulouse, it was my ambition to succeed to the great Marius, to be a true Marius, and in my person to add such luster to the name as it had not known with the other four. 'Victory or death!' said I to myself. (Sit up, I have nearly finished.) I was the first to aim at elegance. My salons excited curiosity. I scorn advertisements; I spend the cost of advertisements on comfort, monsieur, on improvements. Next year I shall have a quartette in a little salon; I shall have music, and the best music. Yes, one must beguile the tedium of the time spent in the dressing-room. I do not shut my eyes to the unpleasant aspects of the operation. (Look at yourself.) A visit to the hairdresser is perhaps quite as tiring as sitting for a portrait. Monsieur knows the famous M. de Humboldt? (I managed to make the most of the little hair that America spared to him, for science has this much in common with the savage—she is sure to scalp her man.) Well, the great man said, as monsieur perhaps knows, that if it was painful to go to be hanged, it was only less painful to sit for your portrait. I myself am of the opinion of a good many women, that a visit to the hairdresser is more trying than a visit to the studio. Well, monsieur, I want people to come here for pleasure.

(You have a rebellious tuft of hair.) A Jew suggested Italian opera-singers to pluck out the gray hairs of young fellows of forty in the intervals; but his signoras turned out to be young persons from the Conservatoire, or pianoforte teachers from the Rue Montmartre.—Now, monsieur, your hair is worthy of a man of talent.—Ossian!" (to the lackey in livery) "brush this gentleman's coat, and go to the door with him.—Who comes next?" he added majestically, glancing round a group of customers waiting for their turn.

"Do not laugh, Gazonal," said Léon, as they reached the foot of the stairs. "I can see one of our great men down yonder," he continued, exploring the Place de la Bourse with his eyes. "You shall have an opportunity of making a comparison; when you have heard him talk, you shall tell me which is the queerer of the two—he or the hairdresser."

"'Do not laugh, Gazonal,'" added Bixiou, imitating Léon's manner. What is Marius's business, do you think?"

"He is a hairdresser."

"He has gradually made a monopoly of the wholesale trade in human hair, just as the provision dealer of whom we shall shortly buy a Strasbourg pie for three francs has the truffle trade entirely in his hands. He discounts bills in his line of business, he lends money to customers at a pinch, he deals in annuities, he speculates on 'Change, he is a shareholder in all the fashion papers; and finally, under the name of a chemist, he sells an abominable drug which brings him in thirty thousand francs per annum as his share of the profits, and costs a hundred thousand francs in advertisements."

"Is it possible?"

"Bear this in mind," Bixiou replied with gravity, "in Paris there is no such thing as a small trade; everything here is done on a large scale, be it frippery or matches. The barkeeper standing with a napkin under his arm to watch you enter his shop very likely has an income of fifty thousand fracs from investments in the Funds. The waiter has a vote, and may offer himself for election; a man whom you might take for a beggar in the street carries a hundred thousand francs' worth of unmounted diamonds in his waistcoat pocket, and does not steal them."

The three, inseparable for that day at least, were piloted by Léon de Lora in such sort that at the corner of the Rue Vivienne they ran against a man of forty or thereabouts with a ribbon in his buttonhole.

"My dear Dubourdieu, what are you dreaming about? Some beautiful allegorical composition?" asked Léon.—"My dear cousin, I have the pleasure of introducing you to the well-known painter Dubourdieu, celebrated no less for his genius than for his humanitarian convictions.—Dubourdieu, my counsin Palafox!"

Dubourdieu, a pallid little man with melancholy blue eyes, nodded slightly while Gazonal bowed low to the man of genius.

"So you have nominated Stidmann instead of——"

"How could I help it! I was away," returned Léon de Lora.

"You are lowering the standard of the Académie," resumed the painter. "To think of choosing such a man as that! I do not wish to say any harm of him, but he really is a craftsman. . . . What is to become of the first and most permanent of all the arts, of sculpture that reveals the life of nation when everything else, even the memory of its existence, has passed away—of sculpture that sets the seal of eternity upon the great man? The sculptor's office is sacred. He sums up the thought of his age, and you, forsooth, fill the ranks of the priesthood by taking in a bungling mantelpiece maker, a designer of drawing-room ornaments, one of those that

buy and sell in the Temple! Ah! as Chamfort said, 'If you are to endure life in Paris, you must begin by swallowing a viper very morning. . . .' After all, Art remains to us; no one can prevent us from cultivating Art."

"And besides, my dear fellow, you have a consolation which few among artists possess—the future is yours," put in Bixiou. "When everyone is converted to our doctrine, you will be the foremost man in your art, for the ideas which you put into your work will be comprehensible to all—when they are common property. In fifty years' time you will be for the world at large what you are now for us—a great man. It is only a question of holding out till then."

The artist's face smoothed itself out, after the wont of mortal man when flattered on his weak side. "I have just finished an allegorical figure of Harmony," he said. "If you care to come to see it, you will understand at once how I managed to put two years' work into it. It is all there. At a glance you see the Destiny of the Globe. She is a queen holding a bishop's crozier, the symbol of the aggrandizement of races useful to man; on her head she wears the cap of Liberty, and after the Egyptian fashion (the ancient Egyptians seem to have had foreshadowings of Fourier) she has six breasts. Her feet rest upon two clasped hands, which inclose the globe between them, to signify the brotherhood of man; beneath her lie broken fragments of cannon, because all war is abolished, and I have tried to give her the serenity of Agriculture triumphant. At her feet, besides, I have put an enormous Savoy cabbage, the Master's symbol of Concord. Oh, it it not Fourier's least claim to our veneration that he revived the association of plants and ideas; every detail in creation is linked to the rest by its significance as a part of a whole, and no less by its special language. In a hundred years' time the globe will be much larger than it is now——"

"And how will that come to pass?" inquired Gazonal, amazed to hear a man outside a lunatic asylum talking in this way.

"By the increase of production. If people make up their minds to apply the System, it should react upon the stars; it is not impossible——"

"And in that case what will become of painting?" asked Gazonal.

"Painting will be greater than ever."

"And will our eyes be larger?" continued Gazonal, looking significantly at his friends

"Man will be once more as in the days before his degradation; our six-foot men will be dwarfs when that time comes——"

"How about your picture," interrupted Léon; "is it finished?"

"Quite finished," said Dubourdieu. "I tried to see Hiclar about a symphony. I should like those who see the picture to hear music in Beethoven's manner at the same time; the music would develop the ideas, which would thus reach the intelligence through the avenues of sight and sound. Ah! if the Government would only lend me one of the halls in the Louvre——"

"But I will mention it if you like. Nothing that can strike people's minds should be left undone."

"Oh! my friends are preparing articles

but I am afraid that they may go too far."

"Pshaw!" said Bixiou, "they will go nothing like as far as the Future——"

Dubourdieu eyed Bixiou askance and went on his way.

"Why, the man is a lunatic," said Gazonal, "moonstruck and mad."

"He has technical skill and knowledge," said Léon, "but Fourier has been the ruin of him. You have just seen one way in which ambition affects an artist. Too often here in Paris, in his desire to reach fame (which for an artist means fortune) by some short cut, he will borrow wings of circumstance; he will think to increase his stature by identifying himself with some Cause, or advocating some system, hoping in time to widen his coterie into a public. Such an one sets up to be a Republican, such another a Saint-Simonian, an aristocrat or a Catholic, or he is for the *juste milieu,* or the Middle Ages, or for Germany. But while opinions cannot give talent, they inevitably spoil it; witness this unfortunate being whom you have just seen. An artist's opinion ought to be a faith in works; and his one way to success is to work while nature gives him the sacred fire."

"Let us fly, Léon is moralizing," said Bixiou.

"And did the man seriously mean what he said?" cried Gazonal; he had not yet recovered from his amazement.

"Very seriously," replied Bixiou; "he was quite as much in earnest as the king of hairdressers just now."

"He is crazy," said Gazonal.

"He is not the only man driven crazy by Fourier's notions," returned Bixiou. "You know nothing of Paris. Ask for a hundred thousand francs to carry out some idea most likely to be useful to the species (to try a steam-engine, for instance), you will die like Salomon de Caus at Bicêtre; but when it comes to a paradox, anyone will be cut in pieces for it—he and his fortune. Well, here it is with systems as with practical matters. Impossible newspapers have consumed millions of francs in the last fifteen years. The very fact that you are in the right of it makes your lawsuit so difficult to win; taken together with the other fact that your prefect has his own private ends to gain, as you say."

"Can you understand how a clever man can live anywhere but in Paris when once he knows the psychology of the city?" asked Léon.

"Suppose that we take Gazonal to Mother Fontaine," suggested Bixiou, beckoning a hackney cab, "it would be a transition from the severe to the fantastic.—Drive to the Rue Vieille-du-Temple," he called to the man, and the three drove away in the direction of the Marais.

"What are you taking me to see?"

"Ocular demonstration of Bixiou's remarks," said Léon; "you are to be shown a woman who makes twenty thousand francs per annum by exploiting an idea."

"A fortune-teller," explained Bixiou, construing Gazonal's expression as a question. "Among folk that wish to know the future, Mme. Fontaine is held to be even wiser than the late Mlle. Lenormand."

"She must be very rich!"

"She has fallen a victim to her idea since lotteries came into existence. In

Paris, you see, great receipts always mean a large expenditure. Every hard head has a crack in it somewhere, like a safety-valve, as it were, for the steam. Everyone that makes a great deal of money has his weaknesses or his fancies, a provision of nature probably to keep the balance."

"And now that lotteries are abolished?"

"Oh, well, she has a nephew, and is saving for him."

Arrived in the Rue Vieille-du-Temple, the three friends entered one of the oldest houses in the street, and discovered a tremulous staircase, with wooden steps laid on a foundation of concrete. Up they went in the perpetual twilight, through the fetid atmosphere peculiar to houses with a passage entry, till they reached the third story, and a door which can only be described by a drawing; any attempt to give an adequate idea of it in words would consume too much midnight oil.

An old crone, so much in keeping with the door that she might have been its living counterpart, admitted the three into a room which did duty as an antechamber, icy cold as a crypt, while the streets outside were sweltering in the heat. Puffs of damp air came up from an inner court, a sort of huge breathing-hole in the building; a box full of sickly-looking plants stood on the window-ledge. A gray daylight filled the room. Everything was glazed over with a greasy fuliginous deposit; the chairs and table, the whole room, in fact, was squalid; the damp oozed up through the brick floor like water through the sides of a Moorish jar. There was not a single detail which did not harmonize with the hook-noosed, pallid, repulsive old hag in the much-mended rags, who asked them to be seated, and informed them that MADAME never saw more than one person at a time.

Gazonal screwed up his courage and went boldly forward.

The woman whom he confronted looked like one of those whom Death has forgotten, or more probably left as a copy of himself in the land of the living. Two gray eyes, so immovable that it tired you to look at them, glittered in a fleshless countenance on either side of a sunken, snuff-bedabbled nose. A set of knuckle-bones, firmly mounted with sinews almost like bone, made as though they were human hands, thrumming like a piece of machinery thrown out of gear upon a pack of cards. The body, a broomstick decently draped with a gown, enjoyed the advantages of still life to the full; it did not move a hair's-breadth. A black velvet cap rose above the automaton's forehead. Mme. Fontaine, for she was really a woman, sat with a black fowl on her right hand, and a fat toad named Ashtaroth on her left. Gazonal did not notice the creature at first.

The toad, an animal of portentous size, was less alarming in himself than by reason of a couple of topazes, each as large as a fifty centime piece, that glowed like lamps in his head. Their gaze was intolerable. "The toad is a mysterious creature," as the late M. Lassailly used to say, after lying out in the fields to have the last word with a toad that fascinated him. Perhaps, all creation, man included, is summed up in the toad; for Lassailly tells us that it lives on almost indefinitely, and it is

well known that, of all animals, its mating lasts the longest.

The black fowl's cage stood two feet away from a table covered with a green cloth; a plank like a drawbridge lay between.

When the woman, the least real of the strange company about the table worthy of Hoffman, bade Gazonal "Cut!"—the honest manufacturer shuddered in spite of himself. The secret of the formidable power of such creatures lies in the importance of the thing we seek to learn of them. Men and women come to buy hope of them; and they know it.

The sibyl's cave was a good deal darker than the antechamber, so much so, in fact, that you could not distinguish the color of the wall-paper. The smoke-begrimed ceiling, so far from reflecting, seemed rather to absorb such feeble light as struggled in through a window blocked up with bleached sickly-looking plant-life; but all the dim daylight in the place fell full upon the table at which the sorceress sat. Her armchair and a chair for Gazonal completed the furniture of a little room cut in two by a garret, where Mme. Fontaine evidently slept. A little door stood ajar, and the murmur of a pot boiling on the fire reached Gazonal's ears. The sounds from the kitchen, the compound of odors in which effluvia from the sink predominated, called up an incongruous association of ideas—the necessities of everyday life and the sense of the supernatural. Disgust was mingled with curiosity. Gazonal caught sight of the lowest step of the deal staircase which led to the garret; he saw all these particulars at a glance, and his gorge rose. The kind of terror inspired by similar scenes in romances and German plays was somehow so different; the absence of illusion, the prosaic sensation caught him by the throat. He felt heavy and dizzy in that atmosphere; the gloom set his nerves on edge. With the very coxcombry of courage, he turned his eyes on the toad, and with sickening sensation of heat in the pit of the stomach, felt a sort of panic such as a criminal might feel at sight of a policeman. Then he sought comfort in a scrutiny of Mme. Fontaine, and found a pair of colorless, almost white eyes, with intolerable unwavering black pupils. The silence grew positively appalling.

"What does monsieur wish?" asked Mme. Fontaine. "His fortune for five francs, or ten francs, or the *grand jeu?*"

"Five francs is quite dear enough," said the Provençal, making unspeakable efforts to fight against the influences of the place. But just as he strove for self-possession, a diabolical cackle made him start on his chair. The black hen emitted a sound.

"Go away, my girl. Monsieur only wishes to spend five francs."

The hen seemed to understand, for when she stood within a step of the cards, she turned and walked solemnly back to her place.

"Which is your favorite flower?" asked the old crone, in a voice hoarse with the accumulation of phlegm in her throat.

"The rose."

"You favorite color?"

"Blue."

"What animal do you like best?"

"The horse. Why do you ask?" queried Gazonal in turn.

"Man is linked to other forms of life by his own previous existences," she saw

sententiously, "hence his instincts, and his instincts control his destiny.—Which kind of food do you like best; fish, game, grain, butcher meat, sweet things, fruit, or vegetables?"

"Game."

"In what month were you born?"

"September."

"Hold out your hand."

Mme. Fontaine scanned the palm put forth for her inspection with close attention. All this was done in a business-like way, with no attempt to give a supernatural color to the proceedings; a notary asking a client's wishes with regard to the drafting of a lease could not have been more straightforward. The cards being sufficiently shuffled, she asked Gazonal to cut and make them up into three packs. This done, she took up the packs, spread them out one above another, and eyed them as a gambler eyes the thirty-six numbers at roulette before he stakes his money.

Gazonal felt a cold chill freeze the marrow of his bones; he scarcely knew where he was; but his surprise grew more and more when this repulsive hag in the greasy, flabby green skull-cap, and false front that exhibited more black silk than hair curled into points of interrogation, began to tell him, in her rheumy voice, of all the events, even the most intimate history of his past life. She told him his tastes, his habits, his character, his ideas even as a child; she knew all that might have influenced his life. There was his projected marriage, for instance; she told him why and by whom it was broken off, giving him an exact description of the woman he had loved; and finally she named his district, and told him about his lawsuit, and so on, and so on.

Gazonal thought at first that the whole thing was a hoax got up for his benefit by his cousin; but the absurdity of this theory struck him almost at once, and he sat in gaping astonishment. Opposite sat the infernal power incarnate, a power that, from among all human shapes, had borrowed that one which has struck the imagination of poets and painters throughout all time as the most appalling—a cold-blooded, shrunken, asthmatic, toothless hag, with hard lips, flat nose, and pale eyes. Nothing was alive about Mme. Fontaine's face save the eyes; some gleam from the depths of the future or the fires of hell sparkled in them.

Gazonal, scarcely knowing what he said, interrupted her to ask the uses of the fowl and the toad.

"To foretell the future. The 'consultant' himself scatters some seeds over the cards; Cleopatra comes to pick them up; and Ashtaroth creeps over them to seek the food that the client gives him. Their wonderful intelligence is never deceived. Would you like to see them at work and hear your future read? It costs a hundred francs."

But Gazonal, dismayed by Ashtaroth's expression, bade the terrible Mme. Fontaine good-day, and fled into the next room. He was damp with perspiration; he seemed to feel an unclean spirit brooding over him.

"Let us go out of this," he said. "Has either of you ever consulted this witch?"

"I never think of taking a step in life until Ashtaroth has given his opinion," said Léon, "and I am always the better for it."

"I am still expecting the honest competence promised me by Cleopatra," added Bixiou.

"I am in a fever!" cried the child of the South. "If I believed all that you tell me, I should believe in witchcraft, in a supernatural power."

"It can only be natural," put in Bixiou. "Half the artists alive, one-third of the *lorettes,* and one-fourth of the statesmen consult Mme. Fontaine. It is well known that she acts as Egeria to a certain statesman."

"Did she tell you your fortune?" inquired Léon.

"No. I had quite enough of it with the past." A sudden idea struck Gazonal. "But if she and her disgusting collaborators can foretell the future," he said, "how is it that she is unlucky in the lottery?"

"Ah! there you have set your finger on one of the great mysteries of occult science," answered Léon. "So soon as the personal element dims the surface of that inward mirror, as it were, which reflects past and future, so soon as you introduce any motive foreign to the exercise of this power that they possess, the sorcerer or sorceress at once loses the power of vision. It is the same with the artist who systematically prostitutes art to gain advancement or alien ends; he loses his gift. Mme. Fontaine once had a rival, a man who told fortunes on the cards; he fell into criminal courses, yet he never foresaw his own arrest, conviction, and sentence. Mme Fontaine is right eight timse out of ten, yet she never could tell that she should lose her stake in the lottery."

"It is the same with magnetism," Bixiou remarked. "A man cannot magnetize himself."

"Good! Now comes magnetism. What next! Do you really know everything?"

"My friend Gazonal, before you can laugh at everything, you must know everything," said Bixiou with gravity. "For my own part, I have known Paris since I was a boy, and my pencil helps me to laugh for a livelihood at the rate of five caricatures per month. So I very often laugh at an idea in which I have faith."

"Now, let us go in for something else," said Léon. "Let us drive to the Chamber and arrange the cousin's business."

"This," continued Bixiou, burlesquing Odry and Gaillard, "is High Comedy; we will draw out the first great speaker that we meet in the Salle des Pas Perdus; and there, as everywhere else, you shall hear the Parisian harping upon two eternal strings—Self-interest and Vanity.

As they stepped into the cab again, Léon noticed a man driving rapidly past, and signaled his wish to speak a word with the newcomer.

"It is Publicola Masson," he told Bixiou; "I will just ask him for an interview this evening at five o'clock when the House rises. The cousin shall see the queerest of all characters."

"Who is it?" asked Gazonal, while Léon went across to speak to his man.

"A chiropodist, that will cut your corns by contract, an author of a treatise on chiropody. If the Republicans triumph for six months, he will without doubt have a place in history."

"And does he keep a carriage?"

"No one but a millionaire can afford to go about on foot here, my friend."

"The Chamber!" Léon called to the driver.

"Which, sir?"

"The Chamber of Deputies," said Léon, exchanging a smile with Bixiou.

"Paris is beginning to confuse me," sighed Gazonal.

"To show you its immensity—moral, political, and literary—we are copying the Roman cicerone that shows you a thumb of the statue of St. Peter, which you take for a life-size figure until you find out that a finger is more than a foot long. You have not so much as measured one of the toes of Paris yet——"

And observe, Cousin Gazonal, that we are taking things as they come, we are not selecting."

"You shall have a Belshazzar's feast to-night; you shall see Paris, *our* Paris, playing at lansquenet, staking a hundred thousand francs without winking an eye."

Fifteen minutes later their hackney cab set them down by the flight of steps before the Chamber of Deputies on that side of the Pont de la Concorde which leads to discord.

"I thought the Chambers were unapproachable," said Gazonal, surprised to find himself in the great Salle des Pas Perdus.

"That depends," said Bixiou. "Physically speaking, it costs you thirty sous in cab hire; politically speaking, rather more. A poet says that the swallows think that the Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile was built for them; and we artists believe that this public monument was built to console the failures on the stage of the Théâtre-Français and to amuse us; but these state-paid play-actors are more expensive than the others, and it is not every day that we get our money's worth."

"So this is the Chamber! . . ." repeated Gazonal. He strode through the great hall, almost empty now, looking about him with an expression which Bixiou noted down in his memory for one of the famous caricatures in which he rivals Gavarni. Léon on his side walked up to one of the ushers who come and go constantly between the Salle des Séances itself and the lobby, where the reporters of the Moniteur are at work while the House is sitting, with some persons attached to the Chamber.

"The Minister is here," the usher was telling Léon as Gazonal came up, "but I do not know whether M. Giraud has gone or not; I will see——" He opened one of the folding doors through which no one is allowed to pass save deputies, ministers, or royal commissioners, when a man came out, young as yet, as it seemed to Gazonal, in spite of his forty-eight years. To this newcomer the usher pointed out Léon de Lora.

"Aha! you here!" he said, shaking hands with Léon and Bixiou. "You rascals! what do you want in the innermost sanctuary of law?"

"Gad! we have come for a lesson in the art of humbug," said Bixiou. "One gets rusty if one does not."

"Then let us go out into the garden,' said the newcomer, not knowing that Gazonal was one of the company.

Gazonal was at a loss how to classify the well-dressed stranger in plain black from head to foot, with a ribbon and an order; but he followed to the terrace by the river once known as the Quai

Napoléon. Out in the garden the *ci-devant* young man gave vent to a laugh, suppressed since his appearance in the Salle des Pas Perdus.

"Why, what is the matter with you?" asked Léon.

"My dear friend, we are driven to tell terrific lies with incredible coolness to prove the sincerity of the constitutional government. Now I myself have my moods. There are days when I can lie like a political programme, and others when I cannot keep my countenance. This is one of my hilarious days. Now the Opposition has called upon the chief secretary to disclose secrets of diplomacy which he would not impart if they were in office, and at this moment he is on his legs preparing to go through a gymnastic performance. And as he is an honest man that will not lie on his own account, he said confidentially to me before he mounted to the breach, 'I have not a notion what to tell them.' So, when I saw him there, an uncontrollable desire to laugh seized me, and I went out, for you cannot very well have your laugh out on the Ministerial benches, where my youth occasionally revisits me unseasonably."

"At last!" cried Gazonal. "At last! I have found an honest man in Paris. You must be indeed great!" he continued, looking at the stranger.

"I say, who is the gentleman?" inquired the other, scrutinizing Gazonal as he spoke.

"A cousin of mine," Léon put in hastily. "I can answer for his silence and loyalty as for my own. We have come here on his account; he has a lawsuit on hand, it depends on your department; his prefect simply wishes to ruin him, and we have come to see you about it and to prevent the Council of State from confirming injustice."

"Who is the chairman?"

"Massol."

"Good."

"And our friends Claude Vignon and Giraud are on the committee," added Bixiou.

"Just say a word to them, and let them come to Carabine's to-night," said Léon. "Du Tillet is giving a party, ostensibly a meeting of railway shareholders, for they rob you more than ever on the highways now."

"But, I say, is this in the Pyrénées?" inquired the young-looking stranger, grown serious by this time.

"Yes," said Gazonal.

"And you do not vote for us at the general election," he continued, fixing his eyes on Gazonal.

"No; but the remarks you made just now have corrupted me. On the honor of a Commandant of the National Guard, I will see that your candidate is returned——"

"Very well. Can you further guarantee your cousin?" asked the young-looking man, addressing Léon.

"We are forming him," said Bixiou, in a very comical tone.

"Well, I shall see," said the other, and he hurried back to the Salle des Séances.

"I say, who is that?"

"The Comte de Rastignac; he is the head of the department in which your affair is going on."

"A Minister! Is that all?"

"He is an old friend of ours as well, and he has three hundred thousand

livres a year, and he is a peer of France, and the King has given him the title of Count. He is Nucingen's son-in-law, and one of the two or three statesmen produced by the Revolution of July. Now and then, however, he finds office dull, and comes out to have a laugh with us."

"But, look here, cousin, you did not tell us that you were on the other side down yonder," said Léon, taking Gazonal by the arm. "How stupid you are! One deputy more or less to the Right or Left, will you sleep any the softer for that?"

"We are on the side of the others——"

"Let them be," said Bixiou—Monrose himself could not have spoken the words more comically—"let them be, they have Providence on their side, and Providence will look after them without your assistance and in spite of themselves.—A manufacturer is bound to be a necessarian."

"Good! here comes Maxime with Canalis and Giraud," cried Léon.

"Come, friend Gazonal; the promised actors are arriving on the scene."

The three went towards the newcomers, who to all appearance were lounging on the terrace.

"Have they sent you about your business that you are doing like this?" inquired Bixiou, addressing Giraud.

"No. We have come out for a breath of air till the ballot is over."

"And how did the chief secretary get out of it?"

"He was magnificent!" said Canalis.

"Magnificent!" from Giraud.

"Magnificent!" from Maxime.

"I say! Right, Left, and Center all of one mind!"

"Each of us has a different idea in his head though," Maxime de Trailles remarked. (Maxime was a Ministerialist.)

"Yes," laughed Canalis. Canalis had once been in office, but he was now edging away towards the Right.

"You have just enjoyed a great triumph," Maxime said, addressing Canalis, "for you drove the Minister to reply."

"Yes, and to lie like a charlatan," returned Canalis.

"A glorious victory!" commented honest Giraud. "What would you have done in his place?"

"I should have lied likewise."

"Nobody calls it 'lying,'" said Maxime; "it is called 'covering the Crown,'" and he drew Canalis a few paces aside.

Léon turned to Giraud.

"Canalis is a very good speaker," he said.

"Yes and no," returned the State Councilor. "He is an emtpy drum, an artist in words rather than a speaker. In short, 'tis a fine instrument, but it is not music, and therefore he has not had and never will have 'the ear of the House.' He thinks that France cannot do without him; but whatever happens, he cannot possibly be 'the man of the situation.'"

Canalis and Maxime rejoined the group just as Giraud, deputy of the Center-Left, delivered himself of this verdict. Maxime took Giraud by the arm and drew him away, probably to give the same confidences that Canalis had received.

"What an honest, worthy fellow he is!" said Léon, indicating Giraud.

"That kind of honesty is the ruin of a government," replied Canalis.

"Is he a good speaker in your opinion?"

"Yes and no," said Canalis. "He is wordy and prosy. He is a plodding reasoner, a good logician; but he does not comprehend the wider logic—the logic of events and of affairs—for which reason he has not and never will have 'the ear of the House'——"

Canalis was in the midst of his summing-up when the subject of his remarks came towards them with Maxime; and, forgetting that there was a stranger present whose discretion was not so certain as Léon's or Bixiou's, he took Canalis's hand significantly.

"Very good," said he, "I agree to M. le Comte de Trailles's proposals. I will ask the question, but it will be pressed hard."

"Then we shall have the House with us on the question, for a man of your capacity and eloquence 'always has the ear of the House,'" returned Canalis. "I will undertake to crush you and no mistake."

"You very likely will bring about a change of ministry, for on such ground you can do anything you like with the House, and you will be 'the man of the situation'——"

"Maxime has hocused them both," said Léon, turning to his cousin. "That fine fellow is as much at home in parliamentary intrigue as a fish in water."

"Who is he?" asked Gazonal.

"He *was* a scamp; he *is* in a fair way to be an ambassador," answered Bixiou.

"Giraud," said Léon, "do not go until you have asked Rastignac to say something, as he promised me he would, about a lawsuit that will come up for decision before you the day after to-morrow; it affects my cousin here. I will come round to-morrow morning to see you about it." And the three friends followed the three politicians, at a certain distance, to the Salles des Pas Perdus.

"Now, cousin, look at the two yonder," said Léon, pointing out a retired and very famous Minister and the leader of the Left Center, "those are two speakers that always 'have the ear of the House'; they have been called in joke the leaders of His Majesty's Opposition; they have the ear of the House, so much so indeed that they very often pull it."

"It is four o'clock. Let us go back to the Rue de Berlin," said Bixiou.

"Yes. You have just seen the heart of the Government; now you ought to see the parasites and ascarides, the tapeworm, or, since one must call him by his name—the Republican."

The friends were no sooner packed into their cab than Gazonal looked maliciously at his cousin and Bixiou; there was a pent-up flood of Southern and splenetic oratory within him.

"I had my suspicions before of this great jade of a city," he burst out in his thick Southern accent, "but after this morning I despise it. The poor country district, for so shabby as she is, is an honest girl; but Paris is a prostitute, rapacious, deceitful, artificial, and I am very glad to escape with my skin——"

"The day is not over yet," Bixiou said sententiously, with a wink at Léon.

"And why complain like a fool of a so-called prostitution by which you will

gain your case?" added Léon. "Do you think yourself a better man, less hypocritical than we are, less rapacious, less ready to make it a descent of any sort, less taken up with vanity than all those whom we have set dancing like marionettes?"

"Try to tempt me."

"Poor fellow!" shrugged Léon. "Have you not promised your vote and influence, as it is, to Rastignac?"

"Yes; because he is the only one among them that laughed at himself."

"Poor fellow!" echoed Bixiou. "And you distrust *me* when I have done nothing but laugh! You remind me of a cur snapping at a tiger.—Ah, if you had but seen us making game of somebody or other. Do you realize that we are capable of driving a sane man out of his wits?"

At this point they reached Léon's house. The splendor of its furniture cut Gazonal short and put an end to the dispute. Rather later in the day it began to dawn upon him that Bixiou had been drawing *him* out.

At half-past five, Léon de Lora was dressing for the evening, to Gazonal's great bewilderment. He counted up his cousin's thousand-and-one superfluities, and admired the valet's seriousness, when "monsieur's chiropodist" was announced, and Publicola Masson entered the room, bowed to Gazonal and Bixiou, set down a little case of instruments, and took a low chair opposite Léon. The newcomer, a little man of fifty, bore a certain resemblance to Marat.

"How are things going?" inquired Léon, holding out a foot, previously washed by the servant.

"Well, I am compelled to take a couple of pupils, two young fellows that have given up surgery in despair and taken to chiropody. They were starving, and yet they are not without brains——"

"Oh, I was not speaking of matters pedestrian; I was asking after your political programme——"

Masson's glance at Gazonal was more expressive than any spoken inquiry.

"Oh! speak out; that is my cousin, and he is all but one of you; he fancies that he is a Legitimist."

"Oh well, we are getting on; we are getting on. All Europe will be with us in five years' time. Switzerland and Italy are in full ferment, and we are ready for the opportunity if it comes. Here, for instance, we have fifty thousand armed men, to say nothing of two hundred thousand penniless citizens——"

"Pooh!" said Léon, "how about the fortifications?"

"Piecrusts made to be broken," Masson retorted. "In the first place, we shall never allow artillery to come within range; and in the second, we have a little contrivance more effectual than all the fortifications in the world, an invention which we owe to the doctor who cured folk faster than all the rest of the faculty could kill them while his machine was in operation."

"What a rate you are going!" said Gazonal. The sight of Publicola made his flesh creep.

"Oh, there is no help for it. We come after Robespierre and Saint-Just, to improve upon them. They were timid, and you see what came of it—an emperor, the elder branch and then the younger. The Mountain did not prune the social tree sufficiently."

"Look here, you that will be consul, or tribune, or something like it, don't forget that I have asked for your protection any time these ten years," said Bixiou.

"Nothing will happen to you. We shall need jesters, and you could take up Barère's job."

"And I?" queried Léon.

"Oh, you are my client; that will save you; for genius is an odious privileged class that receives far too much here in France. We shall be forced to demolish a few of our great men to teach the rest the lesson that they must be simple citizens."

This was said with a mixture of jest and earnest that sent a shudder through Gazonal.

"Then will there be an end of religion?" he asked.

"An end of a *State religion,*" said Masson, laying a stress on the two last words; "everyone will have his own belief. It is a very lucky thing that the Government just now is protecting the convents; they are accumulating the wealth for our Government. Everybody is conspiring to help us. For instance, all those who pity the people, and bawl so much over the proletariat and the wage-earning classes, or write against the Jesuits, or interest themselves in the amelioration of anybody whatsoever—communists, humanitarians, philanthropists, you understand,—all these folk are our advanced guard. While we lay in powder they are braiding the fuse, and the spark of circumstance will set fire to it."

"Now, pray, what do you want for the welfare of the country?"

"Equality among the citizens, cheap commodities of every kind. There shall be no starving folk on one hand, no millionaires on the other; no bloodsuckers, no victims—that is what we want."

"Which is to say the *maximum* and the *minimum?*" queried Gazonal.

"You have said," the other returned laconically.

"An end of manufacturers?"

"Manufactures will be carried on for the benefit of the State; we shall all have a life interest in France. Every man will have his rations served out as if he were on board ship, and everybody will do the work for which he is fitted."

"Good. And meanwhile, until you can cut your aristocrats' heads off——"

"I pare their nails," said the Republican-Radical, shutting up his case of instruments and finishing the joke himself. Then with a very polite bow he withdrew.

"Is it possible? In 1845?" cried Gazonal.

"If we had time we could show you all the characters of 1793; and you should talk with them. You have just seen Marat. Well, we know Fouquier-Tinville, Collot-d'Herbois, Robespierre, Chabot, Fouché, Barras, and even a magnificent Mme. Roland."

"Ah well, tragedy has not been left unrepresented on this stage," said Gazonal.

"It is six o'clock. We will take you to see Odry in *Les Saltimbanques* this evening, but first we must call upon Mme. Cadine, and actress very initmate with Massol your chairman; you must pay your court assiduously to her to-night."

"As it is absolutely necessary that you should conciliate this power, I will just give you a few hints," added Bixiou. "Do you employ women in your factory?"

"Assuredly."

"That was all that I wanted to know," said Bixiou. "You are not a married man, you are a great——"

"Yes," interrupted Gazonal. "You have guessed; women are my weak point."

"Very good. If you decide to execute a little maneuver which I will teach you, you shall know something of the charm of intimacy with an actress without spending one farthing."

Bixiou, intent on playing a mischievous trick upon the cautious Gazonal, had scarcely finished tracing out his part for him, when they reached Mme. Cadine's house in the Rue de la Victoire. But a hint was enough for the Southern brain, as will shortly be seen.

They climbed the stair of a tolerably fine house, and discovered Jenny Cadine finishing her dinner. She was to play in the second piece at the Gymnase. Gazonal introduced to the power, Léon and Bixiou went aside ostensibly to see a new piece of furniture, really to leave the two alone together; but not before Bixiou had whispered to her that "this was Léon's cousin, a manufacturer worth millions of francs.—He wants to gain his lawsuit against the prefect in the Council of State," he added, "so he wishes to win you first, to have Massol on his side."

All Paris knows Jenny Cadine's great beauty; no one can wonder, therefore, that Gazonal stood dumfounded at sight of her. She had received him almost coldly at first, but during those few minutes that he spent alone with her she was very gracious to him. Gazonal looked contemptuously round at the drawing-room furniture through the door left ajar by his fellow-conspirators, and made a mental estimate of the contents of the dining-room.

"How any man can leave such a woman as you in such a dog-hole as this!——" he began.

"Ah! there it is. It cannot be helped. Massol is not rich. I am waiting until he is a Minister——"

"Happy man!" exclaimed Gazonal, heaving a sigh from the depths of a provincial heart.

"Good," thought the actress, "I shall have new furniture; I can rival Carabine now."

Léon came in. "Well, dear child," he said, "you are coming to Carabine's this evening, are you not? Supper and lansquenet."

"Will monsieur be there?" Jenny asked artlessly and sweetly.

"Yes, madame," said Gazonal, dazzled by his rapid success.

"But Massol will be there, too," rejoined Bixiou.

"Well, and what has that to do with it?" retorted Jenny. "Now let us go, my treasures, I must be off to my theater."

Gazonal handed her down to the cab that was waiting for her at the door, and squeezed her hands so tenderly, that Jenny wrung her fingers.

"Eh!" she cried, "I have not a second set."

Once in the carriage, Gazonal tried to hug Bixiou. "She is hooked!" he cried; "you are a most unmitigated scoundrel!"

"So the women say," returned Bixiou.

At half-past eleven, after the play, a hackney cab brought the trio to Mlle. Séraphine Sinet's abode. Every well-known *lorette* either takes a pseudonym, or somebody bestows one upon her, and Séraphine is better known as Carabine, possibly because she never fails to bring down her "pigeon." She had come to be almost indispensable to du Tillet, the famous banker and member of the Left Center, and at that time she was living in charming rooms in the Rue Saint-Georges. There are certain houses in Paris that seem fated to carry on a tradition; this particular house had already seen seven reigns of courtesans. A stockbroker had installed Suzanne de Val-Noble in it somewhere about the year 1827. The notorious Esther had here driven the Baron de Nucingen to commit the only follies of his life. Here Florine, and she whom some facetiously call the *"late* Mme. Schontz," had shone in turn, and finally when du Tillet tired of his wife he had taken the little modern house and established Carabine in it; her lively wit, her off-hand manners, her brilliant shamelessness provided him with a counterpoise for the cares of life, domestic, public, and financial.

Ten covers were always laid; dinner was served (and splendidly) whether du Tillet and Carabine were at home or no. Artists, men of letters, journalists, and frequenters of the house dined there, and there was play of an evening. More than one member of the Chamber came hither to seek the pleasure that is paid for in Paris by its weight in gold. A few feminine eccentrics, certain falling stars of doubtful significance that sparkle in the Parisian firmament, appeared here in all the splendor of their toilettes. The conversation was good, for talk was unrestrained, and anything might be said and was said. Carabine, a rival of the no less celebrated Malaga, had fallen heir as it were to several salons; the coteries belonging to Florine (now Mme. Nathan), Tullia (afterwards Comtesse du Bruel), and Mme. Schontz (who became the wife of President du Ronceret) had all rallied to Carabine.

Gazonal made but one remark as he came in, but his observation was both legitimate and Legitimist—"It is finer than the Tuileries," said he; and, indeed, his provincial eyes found so much employment with satins, velvets, brocades, and gilding, that he did not see Jenny Cadine in a dress that commanded respect, hidden behind Carabine. She was taking mental notes of her litigant's entry while she chatted with her hostess.

"This is my cousin, my dear," said Léon, addressing Carabine; "he is a manufacturer; he dropped in upon me this morning from the Pyrénées. He knows nothing as yet of Paris; he wants Massol's help in a case that has gone up to the Council of State; so we have taken the liberty of bringing him here to supper, beseeching you at the same time to leave him in full possession of his faculties——"

"As he pleases; wine is dear," said Carabine, scanning the provincial, who struck her as in no wise remarkable.

As for Gazonal, dazzled by the women's dresses, the lights, the gilding, and the chatter of various groups, all concerned, as he supposed, with him and his affairs, he could only stammer out incoherent words.

"Madame—madame—you are—you are very kind."

"What do you manufacture?" asked the mistress of the house, smiling at him.

"Say lace," prompted Bixiou in a whisper, "and offer her pillow-lace or guipures."

"P-p-pill——"

"Pills!" said Carabine. "I say, Cadine, child, you have been taken in."

"Lace," Gazonal got out, comprehending that he must pay for his supper. "It will give me the greatest pleasure to offer you—er—a dress—a scarf—a mantilla of my own manufacture."

"What, three things! Well, well, you are nicer than you look," returned Carabine.

"Paris has caught me," said Gazonal to himself, as he caught sight of Jenny Cadine, and went to pay his respects to her.

"And what should *I* have?" asked the actress.

"Why, my whole fortune!" cried Gazonal, shrewdly of the opinion that to offer all was to offer nothing.

Massol, Claude Vignon, du Tillet, Maxime de Trailles, Nucingen, Du Bruel, Malaga, M. and Mme. Gaillard, Vauvinet, and a host of others crowded in.

In the course of conversation, Massol and Gazonal went to the bottom of the dispute; the former, without committing himself, remarked that the report was not yet drawn up, and that citizens might put confidence in the lights and the independent opinion of the Council of State. After this cut-and-dried response Gazonal, losing hope, judged it necessary to win over the charming Jenny Cadine, with whom he fell head over ears in love. Léon de Lora and Bixiou left their victim in the clutches of the most mischief-loving woman in their singular set, for Jenny Cadine was the famous Déjazet's sole rival.

At the supper-table Gazonal was fascinated by the work of Froment Meurice, the modern Benvenuto Cellini—by costly plate, with contents worth the interest on the wrought silver that held them. The two perpetrators of the hoax had taken care to sit as far away from him as possible; but furtively they watched the wily actress's progress. Ensnared by that insidious hint of new furniture, she had set herself to carry Gazonal home with her; and never did lamb in the Fête-Dieu procession submit to be led by his St. John the Baptist with a better grace than Gazonal showed in his obedience to this siren.

Three days afterwards, Léon and Bixiou, having meanwhile seen and heard nothing of their friend, repaired to his lodging about two o'clock in the afternoon.

"Well, cousin, the decision has been given in your favor."

"Alas! it makes no difference now, cousin," Gazonal answered, turning his melancholy eyes upon them; "I have turned Republican again."

"Quésaco?" asked Léon.

"I have nothing left, not even enough to pay my counsel. Mme. Jenny Cadine holds bills of mine for more than I am worth——"

"It is a fact that Cadine is rather expensive, but——"

"Oh! I have had my money's worth. Ah! what a woman! After all, Paris is too much for a provincial. I am about to retire to La Trappe."

"Good," said Bixiou. "Now you talk sensibly. Here, acknowledge the sovereign power of the capital——"

"And of capital!" cried Léon, holding out Gazonal's bills.

Gazonal stared at the papers in bewilderment.

"You cannot say that we have no notion of hospitality; we have educated you, rescued you from want, treated you, and—amused you," said Bixiou.

"And nothing to pay!" added Léon, with a gesture by which a street-boy conveys the idea that somebody has been successfully "done."

A Second Home

To Madame la Comtesse Louise de Turheim as a token of remembrance and affectionate respect

The Rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, formerly one of the darkest and most tortuous of the streets about the Hôtel de Ville, zigzagged round the little gardens of the Paris Préfecture, and ended at the Rue Martroi, exactly at the angle of an old wall now pulled down. Here stood the turnstile to which the street owed its name; it was not removed till 1823, when the Municipality built a ballroom on the garden plot adjoining the Hôtel de Ville, for the fête given in honor of the Duc d'Angoulême on his return from Spain.

The widest part of the Rue du Tourniquet was the end opening into the Rue de la Tixeranderie, and even there it was less than six feet across. Hence in rainy weather the gutter water was soon deep at the foot of the old houses, sweeping down with it the dust and refuse deposited at the corner-stones by the residents. As the dust-carts could not pass through, the inhabitants trusted to storms to wash their always miry alley; for how could it be clean? When the summer sun shed its perpendicular rays on Paris like a sheet of gold, but as piercing as the point of a sword, it lighted up the blackness of this street for a few minutes without drying the permanent damp that rose from the ground-floor to the first story of these dark and silent tenements.

The residents, who lighted their lamps at five o'clock in the month of June, in winter never put them out. To this day the enterprising wayfarer who should approach the Marais along the quays, past the end of the Rue du Chaume, the Rues de l'Homme Armé, des Billettes, and des Deux-Portes, all leading to the Rue du Tourniquet, might think he had passed through cellars all the way.

Almost all the streets of old Paris, of which ancient chronicles laud the magnificence, were like this damp and gloomy labyrinth, where antiquaries still find historical curiosities to admire. For instance, on the house then forming the corner where the Rue du Tourniquet joined the Rue de la Tixeranderie, the clamps might still be seen of two strong iron rings fixed to the wall, the relics of the chains put up every night by the watch to secure public safety.

This house, remarkable for its antiquity, had been constructed in a way

that bore witness to the unhealthiness of these old dwellings; for, to preserve the ground-floor from damp, the arches of the cellars rose about two feet above the soil, and the house was entered up three outside steps. The door was crowned by a closed arch, of which the keystone bore a female head and some lime-eaten arabesques. Three windows, their sills about five feet from the ground, belonged to a small set of rooms looking out on the Rue du Tourniquet, whence they derived their light. These windows were protected by strong iron bars, very wide apart, and ending below in an outward curve like the bars of a baker's window.

If any passer-by during the day were curious enough to peep into the two rooms forming this little dwelling, he could see nothing; for only under the sun of July could he discern, in the second room, two beds hung with green serge, placed side by side under the paneling of an old-fashioned alcove; but in the afternoon, by about three o'clock, when the candles were lighted, through the pane of the first room an old woman might be seen sitting on a stool by the fireplace, where she nursed the fire in a brazier, to simmer a stew, such as porters' wives are expert in. A few kitchen utensils, hung up against the wall, were visible in the twilight.

At that hour an old table on trestles, but bare of linen, was laid with pewter spoons, and the dish concocted by the old woman. Three wretched chairs were all the furniture of this room, which was at once the kitchen and the dining-room. Over the chimney-shelf were a piece of looking-glass, a tinder-box, three glasses, some matches, and a large, cracked, white jug. Still, the floor, the utensils, the fireplace, all gave a pleasant sense of the perfect cleanliness and thrift that pervaded the dull and gloomy home.

The old woman's pale, withered face was quite in harmony with the darkness of the street and the mustiness of the place. As she sat there, motionless, in her chair, it might have been thought that she was as inseparable from the house as a snail from its brown shell; her face, alert with a vague expression of mischief, was framed in a flat cap made of net, which barely covered her white hair; her fine, gray eyes were as quiet as the street, and the many wrinkles in her face might be compared to the cracks in the walls. Whether she had been born in poverty, or had fallen from some past splendor, she now seemed to have been long resigned to her melancholy existence.

From sunrise till dark, excepting when she was getting a meal ready, or, with a basket on her arm, was out purchasing provisions, the old woman sat in the adjoining room by the further window, opposite a young girl. At any hour of the day the passer-by could see the needlewoman seated in an old, red velvet chair, bending over an embroidery frame, and stitching indefatigably.

Her mother had a green pillow on her knee, and busied herself with hand-made net; but her fingers could move the bobbins but slowly; her sight was feeble, for on her nose there rested a pair of those antiquated spectacles which keep their place on the nostrils by the grip of a spring. By night these two hard-working women set a lamp between them; and the light, concentrated by two globe-shaped bottles of water, showed

the elder the fine network made by the threads on her pillow, and the younger the most delicate details of the pattern she was embroidering. The outward bend of the window bars had allowed the girl to rest a box of earth on the window-sill, in which grew some sweet peas, nasturtiums, a sickly little honeysuckle, and some convolvulus that twined its frail stems up the iron bars. These etiolated plants produced a few pale flowers, and added a touch of indescribable sadness and sweetness to the picture offered by this window, in which the two figures were appropriately framed.

The most selfish soul who chanced to see this domestic scene would carry away with him a perfect image of the life led in Paris by the working class of women, for the embroideress evidently lived by her needle. Many, as they passed through the turnstile, found themselves wondering how a girl could preserve her color, living in such a cellar. A student of lively imagination, going that way to cross to the Quartier-Latin, would compare this obscure and vegetative life to that of the ivy that clung to these chill walls, to that of the peasants born to labor, who are born, toil, and die unknown to the world they have helped to feed. A house-owner, after studying the house with the eye of a valuer, would have said, "What will become of those two women if embroidery should go out of fashion?" Among the men who, having some appointment at the Hôtel de Ville or the Palais de Justice, were obliged to go through this street at fixed hours, either on their way to business or on their return home, there may have been some charitable soul. Some widower or Adonis of forty, brought so often into the secrets of these sad lives, may perhaps have reckoned on the poverty of this mother and daughter, and have hoped to become the master at no great cost of the innocent workwoman, whose nimble and dimpled fingers, youthful figure, and white skin—a charm due, no doubt, to living in this sunless street—had excited his admiration. Perhaps, again, some honest clerk, with twelve hundred francs a year, seeing every day the diligence the girl gave to her needle, and appreciating the purity of her life, was only waiting for improved prospects to unite one humble life with another, one form of toil to another, and to bring at any rate a man's arm and a calm affection, pale-hued like the flowers in the window, to uphold this home.

Vague hope certainly gave life to the mother's dim, gray eyes. Every morning, after the most frugal breakfast, she took up her pillow, though chiefly for the look of the thing, for she would lay her spectacles on a little mahogany work-table as old as herself, and look out of window from about half-past eight till ten at the regular passers in the street; she caught their glances, remarked on their gait, their dress, their countenance, and almost seemed to be offering her daughter, her gossiping eyes so evidently tried to attract some magnetic sympathy by maneuvers worthy of the stage. It was evident that this little review was as good as a play to her, and perhaps her single amusement.

The daughter rarely looked up. Modesty, or a painful consciousness of poverty, seemed to keep her eyes riveted to the work-frame; and only some exclamation of surprise from her mother

moved her to show her small features. Then a clerk in a new coat, or who unexpectedly appeared with a woman on his arm, might catch sight of the girl's slightly upturned nose, her rosy mouth, and gray eyes, always bright and lively in spite of her fatiguing toil. Her late hours had left no trace on her face by a pale circle marked under each eye on the fresh rosiness of her cheeks. The poor child looked as if she were made for love and cheerfulness—for love, which had drawn two perfect arches above her eyelids, and had given her such a mass of chestnut hair, that she might have hidden under it as under a tent, impenetrable to the lover's eye—for cheerfulness, which gave quivering animation to her nostrils, which carved two dimples in her rosy cheeks, and made her quick to forget her troubles; cheerfulness, the blossom of hope, which gave her strength to look out without shuddering on the barren path of life.

The girl's hair was always carefully dressed. After the manner of Paris needlewomen, her toilet seemed to her quite complete when she had brushed her hair smooth and tucked up the little short curls that played on each temple in contrast with the whiteness of her skin. The growth of it on the back of her neck was so pretty, and the brown line, so clearly traced, gave such a pleasing idea of her youth and charm, that the observer, seeing her bent over her work, and unmoved by any sound, was inclined to think of her as a coquette. Such inviting promise had excited the interest of more than one young man, who turned round in the vain hope of seeing that modest countenance.

"Caroline, there is a new face that passes regularly by, and not one of the old ones is to compare with it."

These words, spoken in a low voice by her mother one August morning in 1815, had vanquished the young needlewoman's indifference, and she looked out on the street; but in vain, the stranger was gone.

"Where has he flown to?" said she.

"He will come back no doubt at four; I shall see him coming, and will touch your foot with mine. I am sure he will come back; he has been through the street regularly for the last three days, but his hours vary. The first day he came by at six o'clock, the day before yesterday it was four, yesterday as early as three. I remember seeing him occasionally some time ago. He is some clerk in the Préfet's office who has moved to the Marais.—Why!" she exclaimed, after glancing down the street, "our gentleman of the brown coat has taken to wearing a wig; how much it alters him!"

The gentleman of the brown coat was, it would seem, the individual who commonly closed the daily procession, for the old woman put on her spectacles and took up her work with a sigh, glancing at her daughter with so strange a look that Lavater himself would have found it difficult to interpret. Admiration, gratitude, a sort of hope for better days, were mingled with pride at having such a pretty daughter.

At about four in the afternoon the old lady pushed her foot against Caroline's, and the girl looked up quickly enough to see the new actor, whose regular advent would thenceforth lend variety to the scene. He was tall and thin, and wore black, a man of about forty, with

a certain solemnity of demeanor; as his piercing hazel eye met the old woman's dull gaze, he made her quake, for she felt as though he had the gift of reading hearts, or much practice in it, and his presence must surely be as icy as the air of this dank street. Was the dull, sallow complexion of that ominous face due to excess of work, or the result of delicate health?

The old woman supplied twenty different answers to this question; but Caroline, next day, discerned the lines of long mental suffering on that brow that was so prompt to frown. The rather hollow cheeks of the Unknown bore the stamp of the seal which sorrow sets on its victims as if to grant them the consolation of common recognition and brotherly union for resistance. Though the girl's expression was at first one of lively but innocent curiosity, it assumed a look of gentle sympathy as the stranger receded from view, like the last relation following in a funeral train.

The heat of the weather was so great, and the gentleman was so absent-minded, that he had taken off his hat and forgotten to put it on again as he went down the squalid street. Caroline could see the stern look given to his countenance by the way the hair was brushed up from his forehead. The strong impression, devoid of charm, made on the girl by this man's appearance was totally unlike any sensation produced by the other passengers who used the street; for the first time in her life she was moved to pity for someone else than herself and her mother; she made no reply to the absurd conjectures that supplied material for the old woman's provoking volubility, and drew her long needle in silence through the web of stretched net; she only regretted not having seen the stranger more closely, and looked forward to the morrow to form a definite opinion of him.

It was the first time, indeed, that a man passing down the street had ever given rise to much thought in her mind. She generally had nothing but a smile in response to her mother's hypotheses, for the old woman looked on every passer-by as a possible protector for her daughter. And if such suggestions, so crudely presented, gave rise to no evil thoughts in Caroline's mind, her indifference must be ascribed to the persistent and unfortunately inevitable toil in which the energies of her sweet youth were being spent, and which would infallibly mar the clearness of her eyes or steal from her fresh cheeks the bloom that still colored them.

For two months or more the "Black Gentleman"—the name they had given him—was erratic in his movements; he did not always come down the Rue du Tourniquet; the old woman sometimes saw him in the evening when he had not passed in the morning, and he did not come by at such regular hours as the clerks who served Madame Crochard instead of a clock; moreover, excepting on the first occasion, when his look had given the old mother a sense of alarm, his eyes had never once dwelt on the weird picture of these two female gnomes. With the exception of two carriage-gates and a dark ironmonger's shop, there were in the Rue du Tourniquet only barred windows, giving light to the staircases of the neighboring houses; thus the stranger's lack of curi-

osity was not to be accounted for by the presence of dangerous rivals; and Madame Crochard was greatly piqued to see her "Black Gentleman" always lost in thought, his eyes fixed on the ground, or straight before him, as though he hoped to read the future in the fog of the Rue du Tourniquet. However, one morning, about the middle of September, Caroline Crochard's roguish face stood out so brightly against the dark background of the room, looking so fresh among the belated flowers and faded leaves that twined round the window-bars, the daily scene was gay with such contrasts of light and shade, of pink and white blending with the light material on which the pretty needlewoman was working, and with the red and brown hues of the chairs, that the stranger gazed very attentively at the effects of this living picture. In point of fact, the old woman, provoked by her "Black Gentleman's" indifference, had made such a clatter with her bobbins that the gloomy and pensive passer-by was perhaps prompted to look up by the unusual noise.

The stranger merely exchanged glances with Caroline, swift indeed, but enough to effect a certain contact between their souls, and both were aware that they would think of each other. When the stranger came by again, at four in the afternoon, Caroline recognized the sound of his step on the echoing pavement; they looked steadily at each other, and with evident purpose; his eyes had an expression of kindliness which made him smile, and Caroline colored; the old mother noted them both with satisfaction. Ever after that memorable afternoon, the Gentleman in Black went by twice a day, with rare exceptions, which both the women observed. They concluded from the irregularity of the hours of his home-coming that he was not released so early, nor so precisely punctual as a subordinate official.

All through the three first winter months, twice a day, Caroline and the stranger thus saw each other for so long as it took him to traverse the piece of road that lay along the length of the door and three windows of the house. Day after day this brief interview had a hue of friendly sympathy which at last had acquired a sort of fraternal kindness. Caroline and the stranger seemed to understand each other from the first; and then, by dint of scrutinizing each other's faces, they learned to know them well. Ere long it came to be, as it were, a visit that the Unknown owed to Caroline; if by any chance her Gentleman in Black went by without bestowing on her the half-smile of his expressive lips, or the cordial glance of his brown eyes, something was missing to her all day. She felt as an old man does to whom the daily study of a newspaper is such an indispensable pleasure that on the day after any great holiday he wanders about quite lost, and seeking, as much out of vagueness as for want of patience, the sheet by which he cheats an hour of life.

But these brief meetings had the charm of intimate friendliness, quite as much for the stranger as for Caroline. The girl could no more hide a vexation, a grief, or some slight ailment from the keen eye of her appreciative friend than he could conceal anxiety from hers.

"He must have had some trouble yesterday," was the thought that constantly

arose in the embroideress's mind as she saw some change in the features of the "Black Gentleman."

"Oh, he has been working too hard!" was a reflection due to another shade of expression which Caroline could discern.

The stranger, on his part, could guess when the girl had spent Sunday in finishing a dress, and he felt an interest in the pattern. As quarter-day came near he could see that her pretty face was clouded by anxiety, and he could guess when Caroline had sat up late at work; but, above all, he noted how the gloomy thoughts that dimmed the cheerful and delicate features of her young face gradually vanished by degrees as their acquaintance ripened. When winter had killed the climbers and plants of her window garden, and the window was kept closed, it was not without a smile of gentle amusement that the stranger observed the concentration of the light within, just at the level of Caroline's head. The very small fire and the frosty red of the two women's faces betrayed the poverty of their home; but if ever his own countenance expressed regretful compassion, the girl proudly met it with assumed cheerfulness.

Meanwhile the feelings that had arisen in their hearts remained buried there, no incident occurring to reveal to either of them how deep and strong they were in the other; they had never even heard the sound of each other's voice. These mute friends were even on their guard against any nearer acquaintance, as though it meant disaster. Each seemed to fear lest it should bring on the other some grief more serious than those they felt tempted to share. Was it shyness or friendship that checked them? Was it a dread of meeting with selfishness, or the odious distrust which sunders all the residents within the walls of a populous city? Did the voice of conscience warn them of approaching danger? It would be impossible to explain the instinct which made them as much enemies as friends, at once indifferent and attached, drawn to each other by impulse, and severed by circumstance. Each perhaps hoped to preserve a cherished illusion. It might almost have been thought that the stranger feared lest he should hear some vulgar word from those lips as fresh and pure as a flower, and that Caroline felt herself unworthy of the mysterious personage who was evidently possessed of power and wealth.

As to Madame Crochard, that tender mother, almost angry at her daughter's persistent lack of decisiveness, now showed a sulky face to the "Black Gentleman," on whom she had hitherto smiled with a sort of benevolent servility. Never before had she complained so bitterly of being compelled, at her age, to do the cooking; never had her catarrh and her rheumatism wrung so many groans from her; finally, she could not, this winter, promise so many ells of net as Caroline had hitherto been able to count on.

Under these circumstances, and towards the end of December, at the time when bread was dearest, and that dearth of corn was beginning to be felt which made the year 1816 so hard on the poor, the stranger observed on the features of the girl, whose name was still unknown to him, the painful traces of a secret sorrow which his kindest smiles could not dispel. Before long he saw in Caro-

line's eyes the dimness attributable to long hours at night. One night, towards the end of the month, the Gentleman in Black passed down the Rue du Tourniquet at the quite unwonted hour of one in the morning. The perfect silence allowed of his hearing before passing the house the lachrymose voice of the old mother, and Caroline's even sadder tones, mingling with the swish of a shower of sleet. He crept along as slowly as he could; and then, at the risk of being taken up by the police, he stood still below the window to hear the mother and daughter, while watching them through the largest of the holes in the yellow muslin curtains, which were eaten away by wear as a cabbage leaf is riddled by caterpillars. The inquisitive stranger saw a sheet of paper on the table that stood between the two work-frames, and on which stood the lamp and the globes filled with water. He at once identified it as a writ. Madame Crochard was weeping, and Caroline's voice was thick, and had lost its sweet, caressing tone.

"Why be so heartbroken, mother? Monsieur Molineux will not sell us up or turn us out before I have finished this dress; only two nights more and I shall take it home to Madame Roguin."

"And supposing she keeps you waiting as usual?—And will the money for the gown pay the baker, too?"

The spectator of this scene had long practice in reading faces; he fancied he could discern that the mother's grief was as false as the daughter's was genuine; he turned away, and presently came back. When he next peeped through the hole in the curtain, Madame Crochard was in bed. The young needlewoman, bending over her frame, was embroidering with indefatigable diligence; on the table, with the writ, lay a triangular hunch of bread, placed there, no doubt, to sustain her in the night and to remind her of the reward of her industry. The stranger was tremulous with pity and sympathy; he threw his purse in through a cracked pane so that it should fall at the girl's feet; and then, without waiting to enjoy her surprise, he escaped, his cheeks tingling.

Next morning the shy and melancholy stranger went past with a look of deep preoccupation, but he could not escape Caroline's gratitude; she had opened her window and affected to be digging in the square window-box buried in the snow, a pretext of which the clumsy ingenuity plainly told her benefactor that she had been resolved not to see him only through the pane. Her eyes were full of tears as she bowed her head, as much as to say to her benefactor, "I can only repay you from my heart."

But the Gentleman in Black affected not to understand the meaning of this sincere gratitude. In the evening, as he came by, Caroline was busy mending the window with a sheet of paper, and she smiled at him, showing her row of pearly teeth like a promise. Thenceforth the Stranger went another way, and was no more seen in the Rue du Tourniquet.

It was one day early in the following May that, as Caroline was giving the roots of a honeysuckle a glass of water, one Saturday morning, she caught sight of a narrow strip of cloudless blue between the black lines of houses, and said to her mother—

"Mamma, we must go to-morrow for a trip to Montmorency!"

She had scarcely uttered the words, in a tone of glee, when the Gentleman in Black came by, sadder and more dejected than ever. Caroline's innocent and ingratiating glance might have been taken for an invitation. And, in fact, on the following day, when Madame Crochard, dressed in a pelisse of claret-colored merino, a silk bonnet, and striped shawl of an imitation Indian pattern, came out to choose seats in a chaise at the corner of the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis and the Rue d'Enghein, there she found her Unknown standing like a man waiting for his wife. A smile of pleasure lighted up the Stranger's face when his eye fell on Caroline, her neat feet shod in plum-colored prunella gaiters, and her white dress tossed by a breeze that would have been fatal to an ill-made woman, but which displayed her graceful form. Her face, shaded by a rice-straw bonnet lined with pink silk, seemed to beam with a reflection from heaven; her broad, plum-colored belt set off a waist he could have spanned; her hair, parted in two brown bands over a forehead as white as snow, gave her an expression of innocence which no other feature contradicted. Enjoyment seemed to have made Caroline as light as the straw of her hat; but when she saw the Gentleman in Black, radiant hope suddenly eclipsed her bright dress and her beauty. The Stranger, who appeared to be in doubt, had not perhaps made up his mind to be the girl's escort for the day till this revelation of the delight she felt on seeing him. He at once hired a vehicle with a fairly good horse, to drive to Saint-Leu-Taverny, and he offered Madame Crochard and her daughter seats by his side. The mother accepted without ado; but presently, when they were already on the way to Saint-Denis, she was by way of having scruples, and made a few civil speeches as to the possible inconvenience two women might cause their companion.

"Perhaps, Monsieur, you wished to drive alone to Saint-Leu-Taverny," said she, with affected simplicity.

Before long she complained of the heat, and especially of her cough, which, she said, had hindered her from closing her eyes all night; and by the time the carriage had reached Saint-Denis, Madame Crochard seemed to be fast asleep. Her snores, indeed, seemed, to the Gentleman in Black, rather doubtfully genuine, and he frowned as he looked at the old woman with a very suspicious eye.

"Oh, she is fast asleep," said Caroline guilelessly; "she never ceased coughing all night. She must be very tired."

Her companion made no reply, but he looked at the girl with a smile that seemed to say—

"Poor child, you little know your mother!"

However, in spite of his distrust, as the chaise made its way down the long avenue of poplars leading to Eaubonne, the Stranger thought that Madame Crochard was really asleep; perhaps he did not care to inquire how far her slumbers were genuine or feigned. Whether it were that the brilliant sky, the pure country air, and the heady fragrance of the first green shoots of the poplars, the catkins of willow, and the flowers of the blackthorn had inclined his heart to open like all the nature around him: or that

any longer restraint was too oppressive while Caroline's sparkling eyes responded to his own, the Gentleman in Black entered on a conversation with his young companion, as aimless as the swaying of the branches in the wind, as devious as the flitting of the butterflies in the azure air, as illogical as the melodious murmur of the fields, and, like it, full of mysterious love. At that season is not the rural country as tremulous as a bride that has donned her marriage robe; does it not invite the coldest soul to be happy? What heart could remain unthawed, and what lips could keep its secret, on leaving the gloomy streets of the Marais for the first time since the previous autumn, and entering the smiling and picturesque valley of Montmorency; on seeing it in the morning light, its endless horizons receding from view; and then lifting a charmed gaze to eyes which expressed no less infinitude mingled with love?

The Stranger discovered that Caroline was sprightly rather than witty, affectionate, but ill educated; but while her laugh was giddy, her words promised genuine feeling. When, in response to her companion's shrewd questioning, the girl spoke with the heartfelt effusiveness of which the lower classes are lavish, not guarding it with reticence like people of the world, the Black Gentleman's face brightened, and seemed to renew its youth. His countenance by degrees lost the sadness that lent sternness to his features, and little by little they gained a look of handsome youthfulness which made Caroline proud and happy. The pretty needlewoman guessed that her new friend had been long weaned from tenderness and love, and no longer believed in the devotion of woman. Finally, some unexpected sally in Caroline's light prattle lifted the last veil that concealed the real youth and genuine character of the Stranger's physiognomy; he seemed to bid farewell for ever to the ideas that haunted him, and showed the natural liveliness that lay beneath the solemnity of his expression.

Their conversation had insensibly become so intimate, that by the time when the carriage stopped at the first houses of the straggling village of Saint-Leu, Caroline was calling the gentleman Monsieur Roger. Then for the first time the old mother awoke.

"Caroline, she has heard everything!" said Roger suspiciously in the girl's ear.

Caroline's reply was an exquisite smile of disbelief, which dissipated the dark cloud that his fear of some plot on the old woman's part had brought to this suspicious mortal's brow. Madame Crochard was amazed at nothing, approved of everything, followed her daughter and Monsieur Roger into the park, where the two young people had agreed to wander through the smiling meadows and fragrant copses made famous by the taste of Queen Hortense.

"Good Heavens! how lovely!" exclaimed Caroline when, standing on the green ridge where the forest of Montmorency begins, she saw lying at her feet the wide valley with its combes sheltering scattered villages, its horizon of blue hills, its church-towers, its meadows and fields, whence a murmur came up, to die on her ear like the swell of the ocean. The three wanderers made their way by the bank of an artificial stream and came to the Swiss valley,

where stands a chalet that had more than once given shelter to Hortense and Napoleon. When Caroline had seated herself with pious reverence on the mossy wooden bench where kings and princesses and the Emperor had rested, Madame Crochard expressed a wish to have a nearer view of a bridge that hung across between two rocks at some little distance, and bent her steps towards that rural curiosity, leaving her daughter in Monsieur Roger's care, though telling them that she would not go out of sight.

"What, poor child!" cried Roger, "have you never longed for wealth and the pleasures of luxury? Have you never wished that you might wear the beautiful dresses you embroider?"

"It would not be the truth, Monsieur Roger, if I were to tell you that I never think how happy people must be who are rich. Oh yes! I often fancy, especially when I am going to sleep, how glad I should be to see my poor mother no longer compelled to go out, whatever the weather, to buy our little provisions, at her age. I should like her to have a servant who, every morning before she was up, would bring her up her coffee, nicely sweetened with white sugar. And she loves reading novels, poor dear soul! Well, and I would rather see her wearing out her eyes over her favorite books than over twisting her bobbins from morning till night. And again, she ought to have a little good wine. In short, I should like to see her comfortable—she is so good."

"Then she has shown you great kindness?"

"Oh yes," said the girl, in a tone of conviction. Then, after a short pause, during which the two young people stood watching Madame Crochard, who had got to the middle of the rustic bridge, and was shaking her finger at them, Caroline went on—

"Oh yes, she has been so good to me. What care she took of me when I was little! She sold her last silver forks to apprentice me to the old maid who taught me to embroider.—And my poor father! What did she not go through to make him end his days in happiness!" The girl shivered at the remembrance, and hid her face in her hands.—"Well! come! let us forget past sorrows!" she added, trying to rally her high spirits. She blushed as she saw that Roger too was moved, but she dared not look at him.

"What was your father?" he asked.

"He was an opera-dancer, before the Revolution," said she, with an air of perfect simplicity, "and my mother sang in the chorus. My father, who was leader of the figures on the stage, happened to be present at the siege of the Bastille. He was recognized by some of the assailants, who asked him whether he could not lead a real attack, since he was used to leading such enterprises on the boards. My father was brave; he accepted the post, led the insurgents, and was rewarded by the nomination to the rank of captain in the army of Sambre-et-Meuse, where he distinguished himself so far as to rise rapidly to be a colonel. But at Lutzen he was so badly wounded that, after a year's sufferings, he died in Paris.—The Bourbons returned; my mother could obtain no pension, and we fell into such abject misery that we were compelled to work for our living. For some time past she has been ailing, poor dear, and I have

never known her so little resigned; she complains a good deal, and, indeed, I cannot wonder, for she has known the pleasures of an easy life. For my part, as I cannot pine for delights I have never known, I have but one thing to wish for."

"And that is?" said Roger eagerly, as if roused from a dream.

"That women may long continue to wear embroidered net dresses, so that I may never lack work."

The frankness of this confession interested the young man, who looked with less hostile eyes on Madame Crochard as she slowly made her way back to them.

"Well, children, have you had a long talk?" said she, with a half-laughing, half-indulgent air. "When I think, Monsieur Roger, that the 'little Corporal' has sat where you are sitting," she went on after a pause. "Poor man! how my husband worshiped him! Ah! Crochard did well to die, for he could not have borne to think of him where *they* have sent him!"

Roger put his finger to his lips, and the good woman went on very gravely, with a shake of her head—

"All right, mouth shut and tongue still! But," added she, unhooking a bit of her bodice, and showing a ribbon and cross tied round her neck by a piece of black ribbon, "they shall never hinder me from wearing what *he* gave to my poor Crochard, and I will have it buried with me."

On hearing this speech, which at that time was regarded as seditious, Roger interrupted the old lady by rising suddenly, and they returned to the village through the park walks. The young man left them for a few minutes while he went to order a meal at the best eating-house in Taverny; then, returning to fetch them, he led the way through the alleys cut in the forest.

The dinner was cheerful. Roger was no longer the melancholy shade that was wont to pass along the Rue du Tourniquet; he was not the "Black Gentleman," but rather a confiding young man ready to take life as it came, like the two hard-working women who, on the morrow, might lack bread; he seemed alike to all the joys of youth, his smile was quite affectionate and childlike.

When, at five o'clock, this happy meal was ended with a few glasses of champagne, Roger was the first to propose that they should join the village ball under the chestnuts, where he and Caroline danced together. Their hands met with sympathetic pressure, their hearts beat with the same hopes; and under the blue sky and the slanting, rosy beams of sunset, their eyes sparkled with fires which, to them, made the glory of the heavens pale. How strange is the power of an idea, of a desire! To these two nothing seemed impossible. In such magic moments, when enjoyment sheds its reflections on the future, the soul foresees nothing but happiness. This sweet day had created memories for these two to which nothing could be compared in all their past existence. Would the source prove to be more beautiful than the river, the desire more enchanting than its gratification, the thing hoped for more delightful than the thing possessed?

"So the day is already at an end!" On hearing this exclamation from her unknown friend when the dance was

over, Caroline looked at him compassionately, as his face assumed once more a faint shade of sadness.

"Why should you not be as happy in Paris as you are here?" she asked. "Is happiness to be found only at Saint-Leu? It seems to me that I can henceforth never be unhappy anywhere."

Roger was struck by these words, spoken with the glad unrestraint that always carries a woman further than she intended, just as prudery often lends her greater cruelty than she feels. For the first time since that glance, which had, in a way, been the beginning of their friendship, Caroline and Roger had the same idea; though they did not express it, they felt it at the same instant, as a result of a common impression like that of a comforting fire cheering both under the frost of winter; then, as if frightened by each other's silence, they made their way to the spot where the carriage was waiting. But before getting into it, they playfully took hands and ran on together down the dark avenue in front of Madame Crochard. When they could no longer see the white net cap, which showed as a speck through the leaves where the old woman was—"Caroline!" said Roger in a tremulous voice, and with a beating heart.

The girl was startled, and drew back a few steps, understanding the invitation this question conveyed; however, she held out her hand, which was passionately kissed, but which she hastily withdrew, for by standing on tiptoe she could see her mother.

Madame Crochard affected blindness, as if, with a reminiscence of her old parts, she was only required to figure as a supernumerary.

The adventures of these two young people were not continued in the Rue du Tourniquet. To see Roger and Caroline once more, we must leap into the heart of modern Paris, where, in some of the newly-built houses, there are apartments that seem made on purpose for newly-married couples to spend their honeymoon in. There the paper and paint are as fresh as the bride and bridegroom, and the decorations are in blossom like their love; everything is in harmony with youthful notions and ardent wishes.

Halfway down the Rue Taitbout, in a house whose stone walls were still white, where the columns of the hall and the doorway were as yet spotless, and the inner walls shone with the neat painting which our recent intimacy with English ways had brought into fashion, there was, on the second floor, a small set of rooms fitted by the architect as though he had known what their use would be. A simple airy anteroom, with a stucco dado, formed an entrance into a drawing-room and dining-room. Out of the drawing-room opened a pretty bedroom, with a bathroom beyond. Every chimney-shelf had over it a fine mirror elegantly framed. The doors were crowned with arabesques in good taste, and the cornices were in the best style. Any amateur would have discerned there the sense of distinction and decorative fitness which mark the work of modern French architects.

For above a month Caroline had been at home in this apartment, furnished by an upholsterer who submitted to an artist's guidance. A short description of the principal room will suffice to give an idea of the wonders it offered to Caro-

line's delighted eyes when Roger installed her there. Hangings of gray stuff trimmed with green silk adorned the walls of her bedroom; the seats, covered with light-colored woolen sateen, were of easy and comfortable shapes, and in the latest fashion; a chest of drawers of some simple wood, inlaid with lines of a darker hue, contained the treasures of the toilet; a writing-table to match served for inditing love-letters on scented paper; the bed, with antique draperies, could not fail to suggest thoughts of love by its soft hangings of elegant muslin; the window-curtains, of drab silk with green fringe, were always half drawn to subdue the light; a bronze clock represented Love crowning Psyche; and a carpet of Gothic design on a red ground set off the other accessories of this delightful retreat. There was a small dressing-table in front of a long glass, and here the ex-needlewoman sat, out of patience with Plaisir, the famous hairdresser.

"Do you think you will have done to-day?" said she.

"Your hair is so long and so thick, Madame," replied Plaisir.

Caroline could not help smiling. The man's flattery had no doubt revived in her mind the memory of the passionate praises lavished by her lover on the beauty of her hair, which he delighted in.

The hairdresser having done, a waiting-maid came and held counsel with her as to the dress in which Roger would like best to see her. It was in the beginning of September 1816, and the weather was cold; she chose a green *grenadine* trimmed with chinchilla. As soon as she was dressed, Caroline flew into the drawing-room and opened a window, out of which she stepped on to the elegant balcony that adorned the front of the house; there she stood, with her arms crossed, in a charming attitude, not to show herself to the admiration of the passers-by and see them turn to gaze at her, but to be able to look out on the boulevard at the bottom of the Rue Taitbout. This side view, really very comparable to the peep-hole made by actors in the drop-scene of a theater, enabled her to catch a glimpse of numbers of elegant carriages, and a crowd of persons, swept past with the rapidity of *Ombres Chinoises*. Not knowing whether Roger would arrive in a carriage or on foot, the needlewoman from the Rue du Tourniquet looked by turns at the foot-passengers, and at the tilburies—light cabs introduced into Paris by the English.

Expressions of refractoriness and of love passed by turns over her youthful face when, after waiting for a quarter of an hour, neither her keen eye nor her heart had announced the arrival of him whom she knew to be due. What disdain, what indifference were shown in her beautiful features for all the other creatures who were bustling like ants below her feet. Her gray eyes, sparkling with fun, now positively flamed. Given over to her passion, she avoided admiration with as much care as the proudest devote to encouraging it when they drive about Paris, certainly feeling no care as to whether her fair countenance leaning over the balcony, or her little foot between the bars, and the picture of her bright eyes and delicious turned-up nose would be effaced or no from the minds of the passers-by who admired them;

she saw but one face, and had but one idea. When the spotted head of a certain bay horse happened to cross the narrow strip between the two rows of houses, Caroline gave a little shiver and stood on tiptoe in hope of recognizing the white traces and the color of the tilbury. It was he!

Roger turned the corner of the street, saw the balcony, whipped the horse, which came up at a gallop, and stopped at the bronze-green door that he knew as well as his master did. The door of the apartment was opened at once by the maid, who had heard her mistress's exclamation of delight. Roger rushed up to the drawing-room, clasped Caroline in his arms, and embraced her with the effusive feeling natural when two beings who love each other rarely meet. He led her, or rather they went by a common impulse, their arms about each other, into the quiet and fragrant bedroom; a settee stood ready for them to sit by the fire, and for a moment they looked at each other in silence, expressing their happiness only by their clasped hands, and communicating their thoughts in a fond gaze.

"Yes, it is he!" she said at last. "Yes, it is you. Do you know, I have not seen you for three long days, an age!—But what is the matter? You are unhappy."

"My poor Caroline——"

"There, you see! 'poor Caroline'——"

"No, no, do not laugh, my darling; we cannot go to the Feydeau Theater together this evening."

Caroline put on a little pout, but it vanished immediately.

"How absurd I am! How can I think of going to the play when I see you? Is not the sight of you the only spectacle I care for?" she cried, pushing her fingers through Roger's hair.

"I am obliged to go to the Attorney-General's. We have a knotty case in hand. He met me in the great hall at the Palais; and as I am to plead, he asked me to dine with him. But, my dearest, you can go to the theater with your mother, and I will join you if the meeting breaks up early."

"To the theater without you!" cried she in a tone of amazement; "enjoy any pleasure you do not share! Oh, my Roger! you do not deserve a kiss," she added, throwing her arms around his neck with an artless and impassioned impulse.

"Caroline, I must go home and dress. The Marais is some way off, and I still have some business to finish."

"Take care what you are saying, Monsieur," said she, interrupting him. "My mother says that when a man begins to talk about business, he is ceasing to love."

"Caroline! Am I not here? Have I not stolen this hour from my pitiless——"

"Hush!" said she, laying a finger on his mouth. "Don't you see that I am in jest?"

They had now come back to the drawing-room, and Roger's eye fell on an object brought home that morning by the cabinetmaker. Caroline's old rosewood embroidery-frame, by which she and her mother had earned their bread when they lived in the Rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, had been refitted and polished, and a net dress, of elaborate design, was already stretched upon it.

"Well, then, my dear, I shall do some work this evening. As I stitch, I shall fancy myself gone back to those early

days when you used to pass by me without a word, but not without a glance; the days when the remembrance of your look kept me awake all night. Oh, my dear old frame—the best piece of furniture in my room, though you did not give it me!—You cannot think," said she, seating herself on Roger's knee; for he, overcome by irresistible feelings, had dropped into a chair. "Listen.—All I can earn by my work I mean to give to the poor. You have made me rich. How I love that pretty home at Bellefeuille, less because of what it is than because you gave it me! But tell me, Roger, I should like to call myself Caroline de Bellefeuille—can I? You must know: is it legal or permissible?"

As she saw a little affirmative grimace —for Roger hated the name of Crochard —Caroline jumped for glee, and clapped her hands.

"I feel," said she, "as if I should more especially belong to you. Usually a woman gives up her own name and takes her husband's——" An idea forced itself upon her and made her blush. She took Roger's hand and led him to the open piano.—"Listen," said she, "I can play my sonata now like an angel!" and her fingers were already running over the ivory keys, when she felt herself seized round the waist.

"Caroline, I ought to be far from hence!"

"You insist on going? Well, go," said she, with a pretty pout, but she smiled as she looked at the clock and exclaimed joyfully, "At any rate, I have detained you a quarter of an hour!"

"Good-by, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille," said he, with the gentle irony of love.

She kissed him and saw her lover to the door; when the sound of his steps had died away on the stairs, she ran out on to the balcony to see him get into the tilbury, to see him gather up the reins, to catch a parting look, hear the crack of his whip and the sound of his wheels on the stones, watch the handsome horse, the master's hat, the tiger's gold lace, and at last to stand gazing long after the dark corner of the street had eclipsed this vision.

Five years after Mademoiselle Caroline de Bellefeuille had taken up her abode in the pretty house in the Rue Taitbout, we again look in on one of those home-scenes which tighten the bonds of affection between two persons who truly love. In the middle of the blue drawing-room, in front of the window opening to the balcony, a little boy of four was making a tremendous noise as he whipped the rocking-horse, whose two curved supports for the legs did not move fast enough to please him; his pretty face, framed in fair curls that fell over his white collar, smiled up like a cherub's at his mother when she said to him from the depths of an easy-chair, "Not so much noise, Charles; you will wake your little sister."

The inquisitive boy suddenly got off his horse, and treading on tiptoe as if he were afraid of the sound of his feet on the carpet, came up with one finger between his little teeth, and standing in one of those childish attitudes that are so graceful because they are so perfectly natural, raised the muslin veil that hid the rosy face of a little girl sleeping on her mother's knee.

"Is Eugénie asleep, then?" said he,

quite astonished. "Why is she asleep when we are awake?" he added, looking up with large, liquid black eyes.

"That only God can know," replied Caroline with a smile.

The mother and boy gazed at the infant, only that morning baptized.

Caroline, now about four-and-twenty, showed the ripe beauty which had expanded under the influence of cloudless happiness and constant enjoyment. In her the Woman was complete.

Delighted to obey her dear Roger's every wish, she had acquired the accomplishments she had lacked; she played the piano fairly well, and sang sweetly. Ignorant of the customs of a world that would have treated her as an outcast, and which she would not have cared for even if it had welcomed her—for a happy woman does not care for the world—she had not caught the elegance of manner or learned the art of conversation, abounding in words and devoid of ideas, which is current in fashionable drawing-rooms; on the other hand, she worked hard to gain the knowledge indispensable to a mother whose chief ambition is to bring up her children well. Never to lose sight of her boy, to give him from the cradle that training of every minute which impresses on the young a love of all that is good and beautiful, to shelter him from every evil influence and fulfill both the painful duties of a nurse and the tender offices of a mother,—these were her chief pleasures.

The coy and gentle being had from the first day so fully resigned herself never to step beyond the enchanted sphere where she found all her happiness, that, after six years of the tenderest intimacy, she still knew her lover only by name of Roger. A print of the picture of Psyche lighting her lamp to gaze on Love in spite of his prohibition, hung in her room, and constantly reminded her of the conditions of her happiness. Through all these six years her humble pleasures had never importuned Roger by a single indiscreet ambition, and his heart was a treasure-house of kindness. Never had she longed for diamonds or fine clothes, and had again and again refused the luxury of a carriage which he had offered her. To look out from her balcony for Roger's cab, to go with him to the play or make excursions with him on fine days in the environs of Paris, to long for him, to see him, and then to long again,—these made up the history of her life poor in incidents but rich in happiness.

As she rocked the infant, now a few months old, on her knee, singing the while, she allowed herself to recall the memories of the past. She lingered more especially on the month of September, when Roger was accustomed to take her to Bellefeuille and spend the delightful days which seem to combine the charms of every season. Nature is equally prodigal of flowers and fruit, the evenings are mild, the mornings bright, and a blaze of summer often returns after a spell of autumn gloom. During the early days of their love, Caroline had ascribed the even mind and gentle temper, of which Roger gave her so many proofs, to the rarity of their always longed-for meetings, and to their mode of life, which did not compel them to be constantly together, as a husband and wife must be. But now she could remember with rapture that, tortured by foolish fears, she had watched him with trem-

bling during their first stay on this little estate in the Gatinais. Vain suspiciousness of love! Each of these months of happiness had passed like a dream in the midst of joys which never rang false. She had always seen that kind creature with a tender smile on his lips, a smile that seemed to mirror her own.

As she called up these vivid pictures, her eyes filled with tears; she thought she could not love him enough, and was tempted to regard her ambiguous position as a sort of tax levied by Fate on her love. Finally, invincible curiosity led her to wonder for the thousandth time what events they could be that had led so tender a heart as Roger's to find his pleasure in clandestine and illicit happiness. She invented a thousand romances on purpose really to avoid recognizing the true reason, which she had long suspected but tried not to believe in. She rose, and carrying the baby in her arms, went into the dining-room to superintend the preparations for dinner.

It was the 6th of May, 1822, the anniversary of the excursion to the Park of Saint-Leu, which had been the turning-point of her life; each year it had been marked by heartfelt rejoicing. Caroline chose the linen to be used, and arranged the dessert. Having attended with joy to these details, which touched Roger, she placed the infant in her pretty cot and went out on to the balcony, whence she presently saw the carriage which her friend, as he grew to riper years, now used instead of the smart tilbury of his youth. After submitting to the first fire of Caroline's embraces and the kisses of the little rogue who addressed him as papa, Roger went to the cradle, looked at his little sleeping daughter, kissed her forehead, and then took out of his pocket a document covered with black writing.

"Caroline," said he, "here is the marriage portion of Mademoiselle Eugénie de Bellefeuille."

The mother gratefully took the paper, a deed of gift of securities in the State funds.

"But why," said she, "have you given Eugénie three thousand francs a year, and Charles no more than fifteen hundred?"

"Charles, my love, will be a man," replied he. "Fifteen hundred francs are enough for him. With so much for certain, a man of courage is above poverty. And if by chance your son should turn out a nonentity, I do not wish him to be able to play the fool. If he is ambitious, this small income will give him a taste for work.—Eugénie is a girl; she must have a little fortune."

The father then turned to play with his boy, whose effusive affection showed the independence and freedom in which he was brought up. No sort of shyness between the father and child interfered with the charm which rewards a parent for his devotion; and the cheerfulness of the little family was as sweet as it was genuine. In the evening a magic-lantern displayed its illusions and mysterious pictures on a white sheet, to Charles's great surprise, and more than once the innocent child's heavenly rapture made Caroline and Roger laugh heartily.

Later, when the little boy was in bed, the baby woke and craved its limpid nourishment. By the light of a lamp, in the chimney corner, Roger enjoyed the scene of peace and comfort, and

gave himself up to the happiness of contemplating the sweet picture of the child clinging to Caroline's white bosom as she sat, as fresh as a newly opened lily, while her hair fell in long brown curls that almost hid her neck. The lamplight enhanced the grace of the young mother, shedding over her, her dress, and the infant, the picturesque effects of strong light and shadow.

The calm and silent woman's face struck Roger as a thousand times sweeter than ever, and he gazed tenderly at the rosy, pouting lips from which no harsh word had ever been heard. The very same thought was legible in Caroline's eyes as she gave a side-long look at Roger, either to enjoy the effect she was producing on him, or to see what the end of the evening was to be. He, understanding the meaning of this cunning glance, said with assumed regret, "I must be going. I have a serious case to be finished, and I am expected at home. Duty before all things—don't you think so, my darling?"

Caroline looked him in the face with an expression at once sad and sweet, with the resignation which does not, however, disguise the pangs of a sacrifice.

"Good-by, then," said she. "Go, for if you stay an hour longer I cannot so lightly bear to set you free."

"My dearest," said he with a smile, "I have three days' holiday, and am supposed to be twenty leagues away from Paris."

A few days after this anniversary of the 6th of May, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille hurried off one morning to the Rue Saint-Louis, in the Marais, only hoping she might not arrive too late at a house where she commonly went once a week. An express messenger had just come to inform her that her mother, Madame Crochard, was sinking under a complication of disorders produced by constant catarrh and rheumatism.

While the hackney coach-driver was flogging up his horses at Caroline's urgent request, supported by the promise of a handsome present, the timid old women, who had been Madame Crochard's friends during her later years, had brought a priest into the neat and comfortable second-floor rooms occupied by the old widow. Madame Crochard's maid did not know that the pretty lady at whose house her mistress so often dined was her daughter, and she was one of the first to suggest the services of a confessor, in the hope that this priest might be at least as useful to herself as to the sick woman. Between two games of boston, or out walking in the Jardin Turc, the old beldames with whom the widow gossiped all day had succeeded in rousing in their friend's stony heart some scruples as to her former life, some visions of the future, some fears of hell, and some hopes of forgiveness if she should return in sincerity to a religious life. So on this solemn morning three ancient females had settled themselves in the drawing-room where Madame Crochard was "at home" every Tuesday. Each in turn left her armchair to go to the poor old woman's bedside and to sit with her, giving her the false hopes with which people delude the dying.

At the same time, when the end was drawing near, when the physician called in the day before would no longer answer for her life, the three dames took counsel together as to whether it would

not be well to send word to Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille. Françoise having been duly informed, it was decided that a commissionaire should go to the Rue Taitbout to inform the young relation whose influence was so disquieting to the four women; still, they hoped that the Auvergnat would be too late in bringing back the person who so certainly held the first place in the widow Crochard's affections. The widow, evidently in the enjoyment of a thousand crowns a year, would not have been so fondly cherished by this feminine trio, but that neither of them, nor Françoise herself, knew of her having any heir. The wealth enjoyed by Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille, whom Madame Crochard, in obedience to the traditions of the older opera, never allowed herself to speak of by the affectionate name of daughter, almost justified the four women in their scheme of dividing among themselves the old woman's "pickings."

Presently the one of these three sibyls who kept guard over the sick woman came shaking her head at the other anxious two, and said—

"It is time we should be sending for the Abbé Fontanon. In another two hours she will neither have the wit nor the strength to write a line."

Thereupon the toothless old cook went off, and returned with a man wearing a black gown. A low forehead showed a small mind in this priest, whose features were mean; his flabby, fat cheeks and double chin betrayed the easy-going egotist; his powdered hair gave him a pleasant look, till he raised his small, brown eyes, prominent under a flat forehead, and not unworthy to glitter under the brows of a Tartar.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said Françoise, "I thank you for all your advice; but, believe me, I have taken the greatest care of the dear soul."

But the servant, with her dragging step and woe-begone look, was silent when she saw that the door of the apartment was open, and that the most insinuating of the three dowagers was standing on the landing to be the first to speak with the confessor. When the priest had politely faced the honeyed and bigoted broadside of words fired off from the widow's three friends, he went into the sickroom to sit by Madame Crochard. Decency, and some sense of reserve, compelled the three women and old Françoise to remain in the sitting-room, and to make such grimaces of grief as are possible in perfection only to such wrinkled faces.

"Oh, is it not ill-luck!" cried Françoise, heaving a sigh. "This is the fourth mistress I have buried. The first left me a hundred francs a year, the second a sum of fifty crowns, and the third, a thousand crowns down. After thirty years' service, that is all I have to call my own."

The woman took advantage of her freedom to come and go, to slip into a cupboard, whence she could hear the priest.

"I see with pleasure, daughter," said Fontanon, "that you have pious sentiments; you have a sacred relic round your neck."

Madame Crochard, with a feeble vagueness which seemed to show that she had not all her wits about her, pulled out the Imperial Cross of the Legion of Honor. The priest started back at seeing the Emperor's head; he went up to

the penitent again, and she spoke to him, but in such a low tone that for some minutes Françoise could hear nothing.

"Woe upon me!" cried the old woman suddenly. "Do not desert me. What, Monsieur l'Abbé, do you think I shall be called to account for my daughter's soul?"

The Abbé spoke too low and the partition was too thick for Françoise to hear the reply.

"Alas!" sobbed the woman, "the wretch has left me nothing that I can bequeath. When he robbed me of my dear Caroline, he parted us, and only allowed me three thousand francs a year, of which the capital belongs to my daughter."

"Madame has a daughter, and nothing to live on but an annuity," shrieked Françoise, bursting into the drawing-room.

The three old crones looked at each other in dismay. One of them, whose nose and chin nearly met with an expression that betrayed a superior type of hypocrisy and cunning, winked her eyes; and as soon as Françoise's back was turned, she gave her friends a nod, as much as to say, "That slut is too knowing by half; her name has figured in three wills already."

So the three old dames sat on.

However, the Abbé presently came out, and at a word from him the witches scuttered down the stairs at his heels, leaving Françoise alone with her mistress. Madame Crochard, whose sufferings increased in severity, rang, but in vain, for this woman, who only called out, "Coming, coming—in a minute!" The doors of cupboards and wardrobes were slamming as though Françoise were hunting high and low for a lost lottery ticket.

Just as this crisis was at a climax, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille came to stand by her mother's bed, lavishing tender words on her.

"Oh, my dear mother, how criminal I have been! You are ill, and I did not know it; my heart did not warn me. However, here I am——"

"Caroline——"

"What is it?"

"They fetched a priest——"

"But send for a doctor, bless me!" cried Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille. "Françoise, a doctor! How is it that those ladies never sent for a doctor?"

"They sent for a priest——" repeated the old woman, with a gasp.

"She is so ill!—and no soothing draught, nothing on her table!"

The mother made a vague sign, which Caroline's watchful eye understood, for she was silent to let her mother speak.

"They brought a priest—to hear my confession, as they said.—Beware, Caroline!" cried the old woman with an effort, "the priest made me tell him your benefactor's name."

"But who can have told you, poor mother?"

The old woman died, trying to look knowingly cunning. If Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille had noted her mother's face, she might have seen what no one ever will see—Death laughing.

To enter into the interests that lay beneath this introduction to my tale we must for a moment forget the actors in it, and look back at certain previous incidents, of which the last was closely

concerned with the death of Madame Crochard. The two parts will then form a whole—a story which, by a law peculiar to life in Paris, was made up of two distinct sets of actions.

Towards the close of the month of November 1805, a young barrister, aged about six-and-twenty, was going down the stairs of the hotel where the High Chancellor of the Empire resided, at about three o'clock one morning. Having reached the courtyard in full evening dress, under a keen frost, he could not help giving vent to an exclamation of dismay—qualified, however, by the spirit which rarely deserts a Frenchman—at seeing no hackney coach waiting outside the gates, and hearing no noises such as arise from the wooden shoes or harsh voices of the hackney-coachmen of Paris. The occasional pawing of the horses of the Chief Justice's carriage—the young man having left him still playing bouillotte with Cambacérès—alone rang out in the paved court, which was scarcely lighted by the carriage lamps. Suddenly the young lawyer felt a friendly hand on his shoulder, and turning round, found himself face to face with the Judge, to whom he bowed. As the footman let down the steps of his carriage, the old gentleman, who had served the Convention, suspected the junior's dilemma.

"All cats are gray in the dark," said he good-humoredly. "The Chief Justice cannot compromise himself by putting a pleader in the right way! Especially," he went on, "when that pleader is the nephew of an old colleague, one of the lights of the grand Council of State which gave to France the Napoleonic Code."

At a gesture from the chief magistrate of France under the Empire, the foot-passenger got into the carriage.

"Where do you live?" asked the great man, before the footman who awaited his orders had closed the door.

"Quai des Augustins, Monseigneur."

The horses started, and the young man found himself alone with the Minister, to whom he had vainly tried to speak before and after the sumptuous dinner given by Cambacérès; in fact, the great man had evidently avoided him throughout the evening.

"Well, Monsieur *de* Granville, you are on the high road!"

"So long as I sit by your Excellency's side——"

"Nay, I am not jesting," said the Minister. "You were called two years since, and your defense in the case of Simeuse and Hauteserre has raised you high in your profession."

"I had supposed that my interest in those unfortunate émigrés had done me no good."

"You are still very young," said the great man gravely. "But the High Chancellor," he went on, after a pause, "was greatly pleased with you this evening. Get a judgeship in the lower courts; we want men. The nephew of a man in whom Cambacérès and I take great interest must not remain in the background for lack of encouragement. Your uncle helped us to tide over a very stormy season, and services of that kind are not to be forgotten." The Minister sat silent for a few minutes. "Before long," he went on, "I shall have three vacancies open in the Lower Courts and in the Imperial Court in Paris. Come to see me, and take the

place you prefer. Till then work hard, but do not be seen at my receptions. In the first place, I am overwhelmed with work; and besides that, your rivals may suspect your purpose and do you harm with the patron. Cambacérès and I, by not speaking a word to you this evening, have averted the accusation of favoritsim."

As the great man ceased speaking, the carriage drew up on the Quai des Augustins; the young lawyer thanked his generous patron for the two lifts he had conferred on him, and then knocked at his door pretty loudly, for the bitter wind blew cold about his calves. At last the old lodgekeeper pulled up the latch; and as the young man passed his window, called out in a horse voice, "Monsieur Granville, here is a letter for you."

The young man took the letter, and in spite of the cold, tried to identify the writing by the gleam of a dull lamp fast dying out. "From my father!" he exclaimed, as he took his bedroom candle, which the porter at last had lighted. And he ran up to his room to read the following epistle:—

"Set off by the next mail; and if you can get here soon enough, your fortune is made. Mademoiselle Angélique Bontems has lost her sister; she is now an only child; and, as we know, she does not hate you. Madame Bontems can now leave her about forty thousand francs a year, besides whatever she may give her when she marries. I have prepared the way.

"Our friends will wonder to see a family of old nobility allying itself to the Bontems; old Bontems was a red republican of the deepest dye, owning large quantities of the nationalized land, that he bought for a mere song. But he held nothing but convent lands, and the monks will not come back; and then, as you have already so far derogated as to become a lawyer, I cannot see why we should shrink from a further concession to the prevalent ideas. The girl will have three hundred thousand francs; I can give you a hundred thousand; your mother's property must be worth fifty thousand crowns, more or less; so if you choose to take a judgeship, my dear son, you are quite in a position to become a senator as much as any other man. My brother-in-law the Councilor of State will not indeed lend you a helping-hand; still, as he is not married, his property will some day be yours, and if you are not senator by your own efforts, you will get it through him. Then you will be perched high enough to look on at events. Farewell. Yours affectionately."

So young Granville went to bed full of schemes, each fairer than the last. Under the powerful protection of the High Chancellor, the Chief Justice, and his mother's brother—one of the originators of the Code—he was about to make a start in a coveted position before the highest court of the Empire, and he already saw himself a member of the bench whence Napoleon selected the chief functionaries of the realm. He could also promise himself a fortune handsome enough to keep up his rank, for which the slender income of five thousand francs from an estate left him by his mother would be quite insufficient.

To crown his ambitious dreams with a vision of happiness, he called up the

guileless face of Mademoiselle Angélique Bontems, the companion of his childhood. Until he came to boyhood his father and mother had made no objection to his intimacy with their neighbor's pretty little daughter; but when, during his brief holiday visits to Bayeux, his parents, who prided themselves on their good birth, saw what friends the young people were, they forbade his ever thinking of her. Thus for ten years past Granville had only had occasional glimpses of the girl, whom he still sometimes thought of as "his little wife." And in those brief moments when they met free from the active watchfulness of their families, they had scarcely exchanged a few vague civilities at the church door or in the street. Their happiest days had been those when, brought together by one of those country festivities known in Normandy as *Assemblées,* they could steal a glance at each other from afar.

In the course of the last vacation Granville had twice seen Angélique, and her downcast eyes and drooping attitude had led him to suppose that she was crushed by some unknown tyranny.

He was off by seven next morning to the coach office in the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, and was so lucky as to find a vacant seat in the diligence then starting for Caen.

It was not without deep emotion that the young lawyer saw once more the spires of the Cathedral at Bayeux. As yet no hope of his life had been cheated, and his heart swelled with the generous feelings that expand in the youthful soul.

After the too lengthy feast of welcome prepared by his father, who awaited him with some friends, the impatient youth was conducted to a house, long familiar to him, standing in the Rue Teinture. His heart beat high when his father—still known in the town of Bayeux as the Comte de Granville—knocked loudly at a carriage gate off which the green paint was dropping in scales. It was about four in the afternoon. A young maid-servant, in a cotton cap, dropped a short courtesy to the two gentlemen, and said that the ladies would soon be home from vespers.

The Count and his son were shown into a low room used as a drawing-room, but more like a convent parlor. Polished panels of dark walnut made it gloomy enough, and around it some old-fashioned chairs covered with worsted work and stiff arm-chairs were symmetrically arranged. The stone chimney-shelf had no ornament but a discolored mirror, and on each side of it were the twisted branches of a pair of candle-brackets, such as were made at the time of the Peace of Utrecht. Against a panel opposite, young Granville saw an enormous crucifix of ebony and ivory surrounded by a wreath of box that had been blessed. Though there were three windows to the room, looking out on a country-town garden, laid out in formal square beds edged with box, the room was so dark that it was difficult to discern, on the wall opposite the windows, three pictures of sacred subjects painted by a skilled hand, and purchased, no doubt, during the Revolution by old Bontems, who, as governor of the district, had never neglected his opportunities. From the carefully polished floor to the green

checked holland curtains everything shone with conventual cleanliness.

The young man's heart felt an involuntary chill in this silent retreat where Angélique dwelt. The habit of frequenting the glittering Paris drawing-rooms, and the constant whirl of society, had effaced from his memory the dull and peaceful surroundings of a country life, and the contrast was so startling as to give him a sort of internal shiver. To have just left a party at the house of Cambacérès, where life was so large, where minds could expand, where the splendor of the Imperial Court was so vividly reflected, and to be dropped suddenly into a sphere of squalidly narrow ideas—was it not like a leap from Italy into Greenland?—"Living here is not life!" said he to himself, as he looked round the Methodistical room. The old Count, seeing his son's dismay, went up to him, and taking his hand, led him to a window, where there was still a gleam of daylight, and while the maid was lighting the yellow tapers on the candle branches he tried to clear away the clouds that the dreary place had brought to his brow.

"Listen, my boy," said he. "Old Bontems's widow is a frenzied bigot. 'When the devil is old——' you know! I see that the place goes against the grain. Well, this is the whole truth: the old woman is priest-ridden; they have persuaded her that it was high time to make sure of heaven, and the better to secure Saint Peter and his keys she pays before hand. She goes to Mass every day, attends every service, takes the Communion every Sunday God has made, and amuses herself by restoring chapels. She has given so many ornaments, and albs, and chasubles, she has crowned the canopy with so many feathers, that on the occasion of the last Corpus Christi procession as great a crowd came together as to see a man hanged, just to stare at the priests in their splendid dresses and all the vessels regilt. This house too is a sort Holy Land. It was I who hindered her from giving those three pictures to the Church—a Domenichino, a Correggio, and an Andrea del Sarto—worth a good deal of money."

"But Angélique?" asked the young man.

"If you do not marry her, Angélique is done for," said the Count. "Our holy apostles counsel her to live a virgin martyr. I have had the utmost difficulty in stirring up her little heart, since she has been the only child, by talking to her of you; but, as you will easily understand, as soon as she is married you will carry her off to Paris. There, festivities, married life, the theaters, and the rush of Parisian society will soon make her forget confessionals, and fastings, and hair shirts, and Masses, which are the exclusive nourishment of such creatures."

"But the fifty thousand francs a year derived from Church property? Will not all that return——?"

"That is the point!" exclaimed the Count, with a cunning glance. "In consideration of this marriage—for Madame Bontem's vanity is not a little flattered by the notion of grafting the Bontems on to the genealogical tree of the Granvilles—the aforenamed mother agrees to settle her fortune absolutely on the girl, reserving only a life-interest. The priesthood, therefore, are set against the mar-

riage; but I have had the banns published, everything is ready, and in a week you will be out of the clutches of the mother and her Abbés. You will have the prettiest girl in Bayeux, a good little soul who will give you no trouble, because she has sound principles. She has been mortified, as they say in their jargon, by fasting and prayer—and," he added in a low voice, "by her mother."

A modest tap at the door silenced the Count, who expected to see the two ladies appear. A little page came in, evidently in a great hurry; but, abashed by the presence of the two gentlemen, he beckoned to a housekeeper, who followed him. Dressed in a blue cloth jacket with short tails, and blue-and-white striped trousers, his hair cut short all round, the boy's expression was that of a chorister, so strongly was it stamped with the compulsory propriety that marks every member of a bigoted household.

"Mademoiselle Gatienne," said he, "do you know where the books are for the offices of the Virgin? The ladies of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart are going in procession this evening round the church."

Gatienne went in search of the books.

"Will they go on much longer, my little man?" asked the Count.

"Oh, half an hour at most."

"Let us go to look on," said the father to his son. "There will be some pretty women there, and a visit to the Cathedral can do us no harm."

The young lawyer followed him with a doubtful expression.

"What is the matter?" said the Count.

"The matter, father, is that I am sure I am right."

"But you have said nothing."

"No; but I have been thinking that you have still ten thousand francs a year left of your original fortune. You will leave them to me—as long a time hence as possible, I hope. But if you are ready to give me a hundred thousand francs to make a foolish match, you will surely allow me to ask you for only fifty thousand to save me from such a misfortune, and enjoy as a bachelor a fortune equal to what your Mademoiselle Bontems would bring me."

"Are you crazy?"

"No, father. These are the facts. The Chief Justice promised me yesterday that I should have a seat on the Bench. Fifty thousand francs added to what I have, and to the pay of my appointment, will give me an income of twelve thousand francs a year. And I then shall most certainly have a chance of marrying a fortune, better than this alliance, which will be poor in happiness if rich in goods."

"It is very clear," said his father, "that you were not brought up under the old *régime*. Does a man of our rank ever allow his wife to be in his way?"

"But, my dear father, in these days marriage is——"

"Bless me!" cried the Count, interrupting his son, "then what my old émigré friends tell me is true, I suppose. The Revolution has left us habits devoid of pleasure, and has infected all the young men with vulgar principles You, like my Jacobin brother-in-law, will harangue me, I suppose, on the Nation, Public Morals, and Disinterestedness!—Good Heaven! But for the Emperor's sisters, where should we be?"

The still hale old man, whom the

peasants on the estate persisted in calling the Seigneur de Granville, ended his speech as they entered the Cathedral porch. In spite of the sanctity of the place, and even as he dipped his fingers in the holy water, he hummed an air from the opera of *Rose et Colas,* and then led the way down the side aisles, stopping by each pillar to survey the rows of heads, all in lines like ranks of soldiers on parade.

The special service of the Sacred Heart was about to begin. The ladies affiliated to that congregation were in front near the choir, so the Count and his son made their way to that part of the nave, and stood leaning against one of the columns where there was least light, whence they could command a view of this mass of faces, looking like a meadow full of flowers. Suddenly, close to young Granville, a voice sweeter than it seemed possible to ascribe to a human being, broke into song, like the first nightingale when winter is past. Though it mingled with the voices of a thousand other women and the notes of the organ, that voice stirred his nerves as though they vibrated to the too full and too piercing sounds of a harmonium. The Parisian turned round, and, seeing a young figure, though, the head being bent, her face was entirely concealed by a large white bonnet, concluded that the voice was hers. He fancied that the recognized Angélique in spite of a brown merino pelisse that wrapped her, and he nudged his father's elbow.

"Yes, there she is," said the Count, after looking where his son pointed. And then, by an expressive glance, he directed his attention to the pale face of an elderly woman who had already detected the strangers, though her false eyes, deep set in dark circles, did not seem to have strayed from the prayer-book she held.

Angélique raised her face, gazing at the altar as if to inhale the heavy scent of the incense that came wafted in clouds over the two women. And then, in the doubtful light that the tapers shed down the nave, with that of a central lamp and of some lights round the pillars, the young man beheld a face which shook his determination. A white watered-silk bonnet closely framed features of perfect regularity, the oval being completed by the satin ribbon tie that fastened it under her dimpled chin. Over her forehead, very sweet though low, hair of a pale gold color parted in two bands and fell over her cheeks, like the shadow of leaves on a flower. The arches of her eyebrows were drawn with the accuracy we admire in the best Chinese paintings. Her nose, almost aquiline in profile, was exceptionally firmly cut, and her lips were like two rosy lines lovingly traced with a delicate brush. Her eyes, of a light blue, were expressive of innocence.

Though Granville discerned a sort of rigid reserve in this girlish face, he could ascribe it to the devotion in which Angélique was rapt. The solemn words of prayer, visible in the cold, came from between rows of pearls, like a fragrant mist, as it were. The young man involuntarily bent over her a little to breathe this diviner air. This movement attracted the girl's notice; her gaze, raised to the altar, was diverted to Granville, whom she could see but dimly in the gloom; but she recognized

him as the companion of her youth, and a memory more vivid than prayer brought a supernatural glow to her face; she blushed. The young lawyer was thrilled with joy at seeing the hopes of another life overpowered by those of love, and the glory of the sanctuary eclipsed by earthly reminiscences; but his triumph was brief. Angélique dropped her veil, assumed a calm demeanor, and went on signing without letting her voice betray the least emotion.

Granville was a prey to one single wish, and every thought of prudence vanished. By the time the service was ended, his impatience was so great that he could not leave the ladies to go home alone, but came at once to make his bow to "his little wife." They bashfully greeted each other in the Cathedral porch in the presence of the congregation. Madame Bontems was tremulous with pride as she took the Comte de Granville's arm, though he, forced to offer it in the presence of all the world, was vexed enough with his son for his ill-advised impatience.

For about a fortnight, between the official announcement of the intended marriage of the Vicomte de Granville to Mademoiselle Bontems and the solemn day of the wedding, he came assiduously to visit his lady-love in the dismal drawing-room, to which he became accustomed. His long calls were devoted to watching Angélique's character; for his prudence, happily, had made itself heard again the day after their first meeting. He always found her seated at a little table of some West Indian wood, and engaged in marking the linen of her trousseau. Angélique never spoke first on the subject of religion. If the young lawyer amused himself with fingering the handsome rosary that she kept in a little green velvet bag, if he laughed as he looked at a relic such as usually is attached to this means of grace, Angélique would gently take the rosary out of his hands and replace it in the bag without a word, putting it away at once. When, now and then, Granville was so bold as to make mischievous remarks as to certain religious practices, the pretty girl listened to him with the obstinate smile of assurance.

"You must either believe nothing, or believe everything the Church teaches," she would say. "Would you wish to have a woman without religion as the mother of your children?—No.—What man may dare judge as between disbelievers and God? And how can I then blame what the Church allows?"

Angélique appeared to be animated by such fervent charity, the young man saw her look at him with such perfect conviction, that he sometimes felt tempted to embrace her religious views; her firm belief that she was in the only right road aroused doubts in his mind, which she tried to turn to account.

But then Granville committed the fatal blunder of mistaking the enchantment of desire for that of love. Angélique was so happy in reconciling the voice of her heart with that of duty, by giving way to a liking that had grown up with her from childhood, that the deluded man could not discern which of the two spoke the louder. Are not all young men ready to trust the promise of a pretty face and to infer beauty of soul from beauty of feature? An indefinable impulse leads them to be-

lieve that moral perfection must coexist with physical perfection. If Angélique had not been at liberty to give vent to her sentiments, they would soon have dried up in her heart like a plant watered with some deadly acid. How should a lover be aware of bigotry so well hidden?

This was the course of young Granville's feelings during that fortnight, devoured by him like a book of which the end is absorbing. Angélique, carefully watched by him, seemed the gentlest of creatures, and he even caught himself feeling grateful to Madame Bontems, who, by implanting so deeply the principles of religion, had in some degree inured her to meet the troubles of life.

On the day named for signing the inevitable contract, Madame Bontems made her son-in-law pledge himself solemnly to respect her daughter's religious practices, to allow her entire liberty of conscience, to permit her to go to communion, to church, to confession as often as she pleased, and never to control her choice of priestly advisers. At this critical moment Angélique looked at her future husband with such pure and innocent eyes, that Granville did not hesitate to give his word. A smile puckered the lips of the Abbé Fontanon, a pale man, who directed the consciences of this household. Mademoiselle Bontems, by a slight nod, seemed to promise that she would never take an unfair advantage of this freedom. As to the old Count, he gently whistled the tune of an old song, *Va-t-en voir s'ils viennent* ("Go and see if they are coming on!").

A few days after the wedding festivities, of which so much is thought in the provinces, Granville and his wife went to Paris, whither the young man was recalled by his appointment as public prosecutor to the Supreme Court of the Seine circuit.

When the young couple set out to find a residence, Angélique used the influence that the honeymoon gives to every wife in persuading her husband to take a large apartment on the ground-floor of a house at the corner of the Vieille Rue du Temple and the Rue Neuve Saint-François. Her chief reason for this choice was that the house was close to the Rue d'Orléans, where there was a church, and not far from a small chapel in the Rue Saint-Louis.

"A good housewife provides for everything," said her husband, laughing.

Angélique pointed out to him that this part of Paris, known as the Marais, was within easy reach of the Palais de Justice, and that the lawyers they knew lived in the neighborhood. A fairly large garden made the apartment particularly advantageous to a young couple; the children—if Heaven should send them any—could play in the open air; the courtyard was spacious, and there were good stables.

The lawyer wished to live in the Chaussée d'Antin, where everything is fresh and bright, where the fashions may be seen while still new, where a well-dressed crowd throngs the boulevards, and the distance is less to the theaters or places of amusement; but he was obliged to give way to the coaxing ways of a young wife, who asked this as his first favor; so, to please her, he settled in the Marais. Granville's duties required him to work hard—all the more,

because they were new to him—so he devoted himself in the first place to furnishing his private study and arranging his books. He was soon established in a room crammed with papers, and left the decoration of the house to his wife. He was all the better pleased to plunge Angélique into the bustle of buying furniture and fittings, the source of so much pleasure and of so many associations to most young women, because he was rather ashamed of depriving her of his company more often than the usages of early married life require. As soon as his work was fairly under way, he gladly allowed ihs wife to tempt him out of his study to consider the effect of furniture or hangings, which he had before only seen piecemeal or unfinished.

If the old adage is true that says a woman may be judged of from her front door, her rooms must express her mind with even greater fidelity. Madame de Granville had perhaps stamped the various things she had ordered with the seal of her own character; the young lawyer was certainly startled by the cold, arid solemnity that reigned in these rooms; he found nothing to charm his taste; everything was discordant, nothing gratified the eye. The rigid mannerism that prevailed in the sitting-room at Bayeux had invaded his home; the broad panels were hollowed in circles, and decorated with those arabesques of which the long, monotonous moldings are in such bad taste. Anxious to find excuses for his wife, the young husband began again, looking first at the long and lofty anteroom through which the apartment was entered. The color of the panels, as ordered by his wife, was too heavy, and the very dark green velvet used to cover the benches added to the gloom of this entrance—not, to be sure, an important room, but giving a first impression—just as we measure a man's intelligence by his first address. An anteroom is a kind of preface which announces what is to follow, but promises nothing.

The young husband wondered whether his wife could really have chosen the lamp of an antique pattern, which hung in the center of this bare hall, the pavement of black and white marble, and the paper in imitation of blocks of stone, with green moss on them in places. A handsome, but not new, barometer hung on the middle of one of the walls, as if to accentuate the void. At the sight of it all, he looked round at his wife; he saw her so much pleased by the red braid binding to the cotton curtains, so satisfied with the barometer and the strictly decent statue that ornamented a large Gothic stove, that he had not the barbarous courage to overthrow such deep convictions. Instead of blaming his wife, Granville blamed himself, accusing himself of having failed in his duty of guiding the first steps in Paris of a girl brought up at Bayeux.

From this specimen, what might not be expected of the other rooms? What was to be looked for from a woman who took fright at the bare legs of a Caryatid, and would not look at a chandelier or a candlestick if she saw on it the nude outlines of an Egyptian bust? At this date the school of David was at the height of its glory; all the art of France bore the stamp of his correct design and his love of antique types, which indeed gave his pictures the character of colored sculpture. But

none of these devices of Imperial luxury found civic rights under Madame de Granville's roof. The spacious, square drawing-room remained as it had been left from the time of Louis XV., in white and tarnished gold, lavishly adorned by the architect with checkered lattice-work and the hideous garlands due to the uninventive designers of the time. Still, if harmony at least had prevailed, if the furniture of modern mahogany had but assumed the twisted forms of which Boucher's corrupt tast first set the fashion, Angélique's room would only have suggested the fantastic contrast of a young couple in the nineteenth century living as though they were in the eighteenth; but a number of details were in ridiculous discord. The consoles, the clocks, the candelabra, were decorated with the military trophies which the wars of the Empire commended to the affections of the Parisians; and the Greek helmets, the Roman crossed daggers, and the shields so dear to military enthusiasm that they were introduced on furniture of the most peaceful uses, had no fitness side by side with the delicate and profuse arabesques that delighted Madame de Pompadour.

Bigotry tends to an indescribably tiresome kind of humility which does not exclude pride. Whether from modesty or by choice, Madame de Granville seemed to have a horror of light and cheerful colors; perhaps, too, she imagined that brown and purple beseemed the dignity of a magistrate. How could a girl accustomed to an austere life have admitted the luxurious divans that may suggest evil thoughts, the elegant and tempting boudoirs where naughtiness may be imagined?

The poor husband was in despair. From the tone in which he approved, only seconding the praises she bestowed on herself, Angélique understood that nothing really pleased him; and she expressed so much regret at her want of success, that Granville, who was very much in love, regarded her disappointment as a proof of her affection instead of resentment for an offense to her self-conceit. After all, could he expect a girl just snatched from the humdrum of country notions, with no experience of the niceties and grace of Paris life, to know or do any better? Rather would he believe that his wife's choice had been overruled by the tradesmen than allow himself to own the truth. If he had been less in love, he would have understood that the dealers, always quick to discern their customers' ideas, had blessed Heaven for sending them a tasteless little bigot, who would take their old-fashioned goods off their hands. So he comforted the pretty provincial.

"Happiness, dear Angélqiue, does not depend on a more or less elegant piece of furniture; it depends on the wife's sweetness, gentleness, and love."

"Why, it is my duty to love you," said Angélique mildly, "and I can have no more delightful duty to carry out."

Nature has implanted in the heart of woman so great a desire to please, so deep a craving for love, that, even in a youthful bigot, the ideas of salvation and a future existence must give way to the happiness of early married life. And, in fact, from the month of April, when they were married, till the beginning of winter, the husband and wife lived in perfect union. Love and hard work have the grace of making a man

tolerably indifferent to external matters. Being obliged to spend half the day in court fighting for the gravest interests of men's lives or fortunes, Granville was less alive than another might have been to certain facts in his household.

If, on a Friday, he found none but Lenten fare, and by chance asked for a dish of meat without getting it, his wife, forbidden by the Gospel to tell a lie, could still, by such subterfuges as are permissible in the interests of religion, cloak what was premeditated purpose under some pretext of her own carelessness or the scarcity in the market. She would often exculpate herself at the expense of the cook, and even go so far as to scold him. At that time young lawyers did not, as they do now, keep the fasts of the Church, the four rogation seasons, and the vigils of festivals; so Granville was not at first aware of the regular recurrence of these Lenten meals, which his wife took care should be made dainty by the addition of teal, moor-hen, and fish-pies, that their amphibious meat or high seasoning might cheat his palate. Thus the young man unconsciously lived in strict orthodoxy, and worked out his salvation without knowing it.

On week-days he did not know whether his wife went to Mass or no. On Sundays, with very natural amiability, he accompanied her to church to make up to her, as it were, for sometimes giving up vespers in favor of his company; he could not at first fully enter into the strictness of his wife's religious views. The theaters being impossible in summer by reason of the heat, Granville had not even the opportunity of the great success of a piece to give rise to the serious question of playgoing. And, in short, at the early stage of an union to which a man has been led by a young girl's beauty, he can hardly be exacting as to his amusements. Youth is greedy rather than dainty, and possession has a charm in itself. How should he be keen to note coldness, dignity, and reserve in the woman to whom he ascribes the excitement he himself feels, and lends the glow of the fire that burns within him? He must have attained a certain conjugal calm before he discovers that a bigot sits waiting for love with her arms folded.

Granville, therefore, believed himself happy till a fatal event brought its influence to bear on his married life. In the month of November 1808 the Canon of Bayeux Cathedral, who had been the keeper of Madame Bontem's conscience and her daughter's, came to Paris, spurred by the ambition to be at the head of a church in the capital—a position which he regarded perhaps as the stepping-stone to a bishopric. On resuming his former control of this wandering lamb, he was horrified to find her already so much deteriorated by the air of Paris, and strove to reclaim her to his chilly fold. Frightened by the exhortations of this priest, a man of about eight-and-thirty, who brought with him, into the circle of the enlightened and tolerant Paris clergy, the bitter provincial catholicism and the inflexible bigotry which fetter timid souls with endless exactions, Madame de Granville did penance and returned from her Jansenist errors.

It would be tiresome to describe minutely all the circumstances which insensibly brought disaster on this house-

hold; it will be enough to relate the simple facts without giving them in strict order of time.

The first misunderstanding between the young couple was, however, a serious one.

When Granvlile took his wife into society she never declined solemn functions, such as dinners, concerts, or parties given by the Judges superior to her husband in the legal profession; but for a long time she constantly excused herself on the plea of a sick headache when they were invited to a ball. One day Granville, out of patience with these assumed indispositions, destroyed a note of invitation to a ball at the house of a Councilor of State, and gave his wife only a verbal invitation. Then, on the evening, her health being quite above suspicion, he took her to a magnificent entertainment.

"My dear," said he, on their return home, seeing her wear an offensive air of depression, "your position as a wife, the rank you hold in society, and the fortune you enjoy, impose on you certain duties of which no divine law can relieve you. Are you not your husband's pride? You are required to go to balls when I go, and to appear in a becoming manner."

"And what is there, my dear, so disastrous in my dress?"

"It is your manner, my dear. When a young man comes up to speak to you, you look so serious that a spiteful person might believe you doubtful of your own virtue. You seem to fear lest a smile should undo you. You really look as if you were asking forgiveness of God for the sins that may be committed around you. The world, my dearest, is not a convent.—But, as you have mentioned your dress, I may confess to you that it is no less a duty to conform to the customs and fashions of Society."

"Do you wish that I should display my shape like those indecent women who wear gowns so low that impudent eyes can stare at their bare shoulders and their——"

"There is a difference, my dear," said her husband, interrupting her, "between uncovering your whole bust and giving some grace to your dress. You wear three rows of net frills that cover your throat up to your chin. You look as if you had desired your dressmaker to destroy the graceful line of your shoulders and bosom with as much care as a coquette would devote to obtaining from hers a bodice that might emphasize her covered form. Your bust is wrapped in so many folds, that everyone was laughing at your affectation of prudery. You would be really grieved if I were to repeat the ill-natured remarks made on your appearance."

"Those who admire such obscenity will not have to bear the burden if we sin," said the lady tartly.

"And you did not dance?" asked Granville.

"I shall never dance," she replied.

"If I tell you that you ought to dance!" said her husband sharply. "Yes, you ought to follow the fashions, to wear flowers in your hair, and diamonds. Remember, my dear, that rich people—and we are rich—are obliged to keep up luxury in the State. Is it not far better to encourage manufacturers than to distribute money in the form of alms through the medium of the clergy?"

"You talk as a statesman!" said Angélique.

"And you as a priest," he retorted.

The discussion was bitter. Madame de Granville's answers, though spoken very sweetly and in a voice as clear as a church bell, showed an obstinacy that betrayed priestly influence. When she appealed to the rights secured to her by Granville's promise, she added that her director specially forbade her going to balls; then her husband pointed out to her that the priest was overstepping the regulations of the Church.

This odius theological dispute was renewed with great violence and acerbity on both sides when Granville proposed to take his wife to the play. Finally, the lawyer, whose sole aim was to defeat the pernicious influence exerted over his wife by her old confessor, placed the question on such a footing that Madame de Granville, in a spirit of defiance, referred it by writing to the Court of Rome, asking in so many words whether a woman could wear low gowns and go to the play and to balls without compromising her salvation.

The reply of the venerable Pope Pius VII. came at once, strongly condemning the wife's recalcitrancy and blaming the priest. This letter, a chapter on conjugal duties, might have been dictated by the spirit of Fénelon, whose grace and tenderness pervaded every line.

"A wife is right to go wherever her husband may take her. Even if she sins by his command, she will not be ultimately held answerable." These two sentences of the Pope's homily only made Madame de Granville and her director accuse him of irreligion.

But before this letter had arrived, Granville had discovered the strict observance of fast days that his wife forced upon him, and gave his servants orders to serve him with meat every day in the year. However much annoyed his wife might be by these commands, Granville, who cared not a straw for such indulgence or abstinence, persisted with manly determination.

Is it not an offense to the weakest creature that can think at all to be compelled to do, by the will of another, anything that he would otherwise have done simply of his own accord? Of all forms of tyranny, the most odious is that which constantly robs the soul of the merit of its thoughts and deeds. It has to abdicate without having reigned. The word we are readiest to speak, the feelings we most love to express, die when we are commanded to utter them.

Ere long the young man ceased to invite his friends, to give parties or dinners; the house might have been shouded in crape. A house where the mistress is a bigot has an atmosphere of its own. The servants, who are, of course, under her immediate control, are chosen among a class who call themselves pious, and who have an unmistakable physiognomy. Just as the jolliest fellow alive, when he joins the gendarmerie, has the countenance of a gendarme, so those who give themselves over to the practices of devotion acquire a uniform expression; the habit of lowering their eyes and preserving a sanctimonious mien clothes them in a livery of hypocrisy which rogues can affect to perfection.

And besides, bigots constitute a sort of republic; they all know each other; the servants they recommend and hand

on from one to another are a race apart, and preserved by them, as horse-breeders will admit no animal into their stables that has not a pedigree. The more the impious—as they are thought—come to understand a household of bigots, the more they perceive that everything is stamped with an indescribable squalor; they find there, at the same time, an appearance of avarice and mystery, as in a miser's home, and the dank scent of cold incense which gives a chill to the stale atmosphere of a chapel. This methodical meanness, this narrowness of thought, which is visible in every detail, can only be expressed by one word—Bigotry. In these sinister and pitiless houses Bigotry is written on the furniture, the prints, the pictures; speech is bigoted, the silence is bigoted, the faces are those of bigots. The transformation of men and things into bigotry is an inexplicable mystery, but the fact is evident. Everybody can see that bigots do not walk, do not sit, do not speak, as men of the world walk, sit, and speak. Under their roof everyone is ill at ease, no one laughs, stiffness and formality infect everything, from the mistress's cap down to her pin-cushion; eyes are not honest, the folks move like shadows, and the lady of the house seems perched on a throne of ice.

One morning poor Granville discerned with grief and pain that all the symptoms of bigotry had invaded his home. There are in the world different spheres in which the same effects are seen though produced by dissimilar causes. Dullness hedges such miserable homes round with walls of brass, inclosing the horrors of the desert and the infinite void. The home is not so much a tomb as that far worse thing—a convent. In the center of this icy sphere the lawyer could study his wife dispassionately. He observed, not without keen regret, the narrow-mindedness that stood confessed in the very way that her hair grew, low on the forehead, which was slightly depressed; he discovered in the perfect regularity of her features a certain set rigidity which before long made him hate the assumed sweetness that had bewitched him. Intuition told him that one day of disaster those thin lips might say, "My dear, it is for your good!"

Madame de Granville's complexion was acquiring a dull pallor and an austere expression that were a killjoy to all who came near her. Was this change wrought by the ascetic habits of a pharisaism which is not piety any more than avarice is economy? It would be hard to say. Beauty without expression is perhaps an imposture. The imperturbable set smile that the young wife always wore when she looked at Granville seemed to be a sort of Jesuitical formula of happiness, by which she thought to satisfy all the requirements of married life. Her charity was an offense, her soullness beauty was monstrous to those who knew her; the mildness of her speech was an irritation: she acted, not on feeling, but on duty.

There are faults which may yield in a wife to the stern lessons of experience, or to a husband's warnings; but nothing can counteract false ideas of religion. An eternity of happiness to be won, set in the scale against worldly enjoyment, triumphs over everything and makes every pang endurable. Is it not the apotheosis of egotism, of Self beyond the grave? Thus even the Pope was cen-

sured at the tribunal of the priest and the young devotee. To be always in the right is a feeling which absorbs every other in these tyrannous souls.

For some time past a secret struggle had been going on between the ideas of the husband and wife, and the young man was soon weary of a battle to which there could be no end. What man, what temper, can endure the sight of a hypocritically affectionate face and categorical resistance to his slightest wishes? What is to be done with a wife who takes advantage of his passion to protect her coldness, who seems determined on being blandly inexorable, prepares herself ecstatically to play the martyr, and looks on her husband as a scourge from God, a means of flagellation that may spare her the fires of purgatory? What picture can give an idea of these women who make virtue hateful by defying the gentle precepts of that faith which Saint John epitomized in the words, "Love one another"?

If there was a bonnet to be found in a milliner's shop that was condemned to remain in the window, or to be packed off to the colonies, Granville was certain to see it on his wife's head; if a material of bad color or hideous design were to be found, she would select it. These hapless bigots are heart-breaking in their notions of dress. Want of taste is a defect inseparable from false pietism.

And so, in the home-life that needs the fullest sympathy, Granville had no true companionship. He went out alone to parties and the theaters. Nothing in his house appealed to him. A huge Crucifix that hung between his bed and Angélique's seemed figurative of his destiny. Does it not represent a murdered Divinity, a Man-God, done to death in all the prime of life and beauty? The ivory of that cross was less cold than Angélique crucifying her husband under the plea of virtue. This it was that lay at the root of their woes; the young wife saw nothing but duty where she should have given love. Here, one Ash Wednesday, rose the pale and spectral form of Fasting in Lent, of Total Abstinence, commanded in a severe tone—and Granville did not deem it advisable to write in his turn to the Pope and take the opinion of the Consistory on the proper way of observing Lent, the Ember days, and the eve of great festivals.

His misfortune was too great! He could not even complain, for what could he say? He had a pretty young wife attached to her duties, virtuous—nay, a model of all the virtues. She had a child every year, nursed them herself, and brought them up in the highest principles. Being charitable, Angélique was promoted to rank as an angel. The old women who constituted the circle in which she moved—for at that time it was not yet "the thing" for young women to be religious as a matter of fashion—all admired Madame de Granville's piety, and regarded her, not indeed as a virgin, but as a martyr. They blamed not the wife's scruples, but the barbarous philoprogenitiveness of the husband.

Granville, by insensible degrees, overdone with work, bereft of conjugal consolations, and weary of a world in which he wandered alone, by the time he was two-and-thirty had sunk into the Slough of Despond. He hated life. Having too lofty a notion of the responsibilities imposed on him by his position to set the

example of a dissipated life, he tried to deaden feeling by hard study, and began a great book on Law.

But he was not allowed to enjoy the monastic peace he had hoped for. When the celestial Angélique saw him desert worldly society to work at home with such regularity, she tried to convert him. It had been a real sorrow to her to know that her husband's opinions were not strictly Christian; and she sometimes wept as she reflected that if her husband should die it would be in a state of final impenitence, so that she could not hope to snatch him from the eternal fires of hell. Thus Granville was the mark for the mean ideas, the vacuous arguments, the narrow views by which his wife—fancying she had achieved the first victory—tried to gain a second by bringing him back within the pale of the Church.

This was the last straw. What can be more intolerable than the blind struggle in which the obstinacy of a bigot tries to meet the acumen of a lawyer? What more terrible to endure than the acrimonious pin-pricks to which a passionate soul prefers a dagger-thrust? Granville neglected his home. Everything there was unendurable. His children, broken by their mother's frigid despotism, dared not go with him to the play; indeed, Granville could never give them any pleasure without bringing down punishment from their terrible mother. His loving nature was weaned to indifference, to a selfishness worse than death. His boys, indeed, he saved from this hell by sending them to school at an early age, and insisting on his right to train them. He rarely interfered between his wife and her daughters; but he was resolved that they should marry as soon as they were old enough.

Even if he had wished to take violent measures, he could have found no justification; his wife, backed by a formidable army of dowagers, would have had him condemned by the whole world. Thus Granville had no choice but to live in complete isolation; but, crushed under the tyranny of misery, he could not himself bear to see how altered he was by grief and toil. And he dreaded any connection or intimacy with women of the world, having no hope of finding any consolation.

The improving history of this melancholy household gave rise to no events worthy of record during the fifteen years between 1806 and 1825. Madame de Granville was exactly the same after losing her husband's affection as she had been during the time when she called herself happy. She paid for Masses, beseeching God and the Saints to enlighten her as to what the faults were which displeased her husband, and to show her the way to restore the erring sheep; but the more fervent her prayers, the less was Granville to be seen at home.

For about five years now, having achieved a high position as a judge, Granville had occupied the *entresol* of the house to avoid living with the Comtesse de Granville. Every morning a little scene took place, which, if evil tongues are to be believed, is repeated in many households as the result of incompatibility of temper, of moral or physical malady, or of antagonism leading to such disaster as is recorded in this history. At about eight in the morning a housekeeper, bearing no small resemblance to

a nun, rang at the Comte de Granville's door. Admitted to the room next to the Judge's study, she always repeated the same message to the footman, and always in the same tone—

"Madame would be glad to know whether Monsieur le Comte has had a good night, and if she is to have the pleasure of his company at breakfast."

"Monsieur presents his compliments to Madame la Comtesse," the valet would say, after speaking with his master, "and begs her to hold him excused; important business compels him to be in court this morning."

A minute later the woman reappeared and asked on Madame's behalf whether she would have the pleasure of seeing Monsieur le Comte before he went out.

"He is gone," was always the reply, though often his carriage was still waiting.

This little dialogue by proxy became a daily ceremonial. Granville's servant, a favorite with his master, and the cause of more than one quarrel over his irreligious and dissipated conduct, would even go into his master's room, as a matter of form, when the Count was not there, and come back with the same formula in reply.

The aggrieved wife was always on the watch for her husband's return, and standing on the steps so as to meet him like an embodiment of remorse. The petty aggressiveness which lies at the root of the monastic temper was the foundation of Madame de Granville's; she was now five-and-thirty, and looked forty. When the Count was compelled by decency to speak to his wife or to dine at home, she was only too well pleased to inflict her company upon him, with her acid-sweet remarks and the intolerable dullness of her narrow-minded circle, and she tried to put him in the wrong before the servants and her charitable friends.

When, at this time, the post of President in a provincial court was offered to the Comte de Granville, who was in high favor, he begged to be allowed to remain in Paris. This refusal, of which the Keeper of the Seals alone knew the reasons, gave rise to extraordinary conjectures on the part of the Countess's intimate friends and of her director. Granville, a rich man with a hundred thousand francs a year, belonged to one of the first families of Normandy. His appointment to be Presiding Judge would have been the stepping-stone to a peer's seat; whence this strange lack of ambition? Why had he given up his great book on Law? What was the meaning of the dissipation which for nearly six years had made him a stranger to his home, his family, his study, to all he ought to hold dear? The Countess's confessor, who based his hopes of a bishopric quite as much on the families he governed as on the services he rendered to an association of which he was an ardent propagator, was much disappointed by Granville's refusal, and tried to insinuate calumnious explanations: "If Monsieur le Comte had such an objection to provincial life, it was perhaps because he dreaded finding himself under the necessity of leading a regular life, compelled to set an example of moral conduct, and to live with the Countess, from whom nothing could have alienated him but some illicit connection; for how could a woman so pure as Madame de Granville ever tolerate the disorderly life

into which her husband had drifted?" The sanctimonious women accepted as facts these hints, which unluckily were not merely hypothetical, and Madame de Granville was stricken as by a thunderbolt.

Angélique, knowing nothing of the world, of love and its follies, was so far from conceiving of any conditions of married life unlike those that had alienated her husband as possible, that she believed him to be incapable of the errors which are crimes in the eyes of any wife. When the Count ceased to demand anything of her, she imagined that the tranquillity he now seemed to enjoy was in the course of nature; and, as she had really given to him all the love which her heart was capable of feeling for a man, while the priest's conjectures were the utter destruction of the illusions she had hitherto cherished, she defended her husband; at the same time, she could not eradicate the suspicion that had been so ingeniously sown in her soul.

These alarms wrought such havoc in her feeble brain that they made her ill; she was worn by low fever. These incidents took place during Lent 1822; she would not pretermit her austerities, and fell into a decline that put her life in danger. Granville's indifference was added torture; his care and attention were such as a nephew feels himself bound to give to some old uncle.

Though the Countess had given up her persistent nagging and remonstrances, and tried to receive her husband with affectionate words, the sharpness of the bigot showed through, and one speech would often undo the work of a week.

Towards the end of May, the warm breath of spring, and more nourishing diet than her Lenten fare, restored Madame de Granville to a little strength. One morning, on coming home from Mass, she sat down on a stone bench in the little garden, where the sun's kisses reminded her of the early days of her married life, and she looked back across the years to see wherein she might have failed in her duty as a wife and mother. She was broken in upon by the Abbé Fontanon in an almost indescribable state of excitement.

"Has any misfortune befallen you, Father?" she asked with filial solicitude.

"Ah! I only wish," cried the Normandy priest, "that all the woes inflicted on you by the hand of God were dealt out to me; but, my admirable friend, there are trials to which you can but bow."

"Can any worse punishments await me than those with which Providence crushes me by making my husband the instrument of His wrath?"

"You must prepare yourself, daughter, to yet worse mischief than we and your pious friends had ever conceived of."

"Then I may thank God," said the Countess, "for vouchsafing to use you as the messenger of His will, and thus, as ever, setting the treasures of mercy by the side of the scourges of His wrath, just as in bygone days He showed a spring to Hagar when He had driven her into the desert."

"He measures your sufferings by the strength of your resignation and the weight of your sins."

"Speak; I am ready to hear!" As she said it she cast her eyes up to heaven. "Speak, Monsieur Fontanon."

"For seven years Monsieur Granville

has lived in sin with a concubine, by whom he has two children; and on this adulterous connection he has spent more than five hundred thousand francs, which ought to have been the property of his legitimate family."

"I must see it to believe it!" cried the Countess.

"Far be it from you!" exclaimed the Abbé. "You must forgive, my daughter, and wait in patience and prayer till God enlightens your husband; unless, indeed, you choose to adopt against him the means offered you by human laws."

The long conversation that ensued between the priest and his penitent resulted in an extraordinary change in the Countess; she abruptly dismissed him, called her servants, who were alarmed at her flushed face and crazy energy. She ordered her carriage—countermanded it—changed her mind twenty times in the hour; but at about three o'clock, as if she had come to some great determination, she went out, leaving the household in amazement at such a sudden transformation.

"Is the Count coming home to dinner?" she asked of his servant, to whom she never would speak.

"No, Madame."

"Did you go with him to the Courts this morning?"

"Yes, Madame."

"And to-day is Monday?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Then do the Courts sit on Mondays nowadays?"

"Devil take you!" cried the man, as his mistress drove off after saying to the coachman—

"Rue Taitbout."

Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille was weeping; Roger, sitting by her side, held one of her hands between his own. He was silent, looking by turns at little Charles —who, not understanding his mother's grief, stood speechless at the sight of her tears—at the cot where Eugénie lay sleeping, and Caroline's face, on which grief had the effect of rain falling across the beams of cheerful sunshine.

"Yes, my darling," said Roger, after a long silence, "that is the great secret. I am married. But some day I hope we may form but one family. My wife has been given over ever since last March. I do not wish her dead; still, if it should please God to take her to Himself, I believe she will be happier in Paradise than in a world to whose griefs and pleasures she is equally indifferent."

"How I hate that woman! How could she bear to make you unhappy? And yet it is to that unhappiness that I owe my happiness!"

Her tears suddenly ceased.

"Caroline, let us hope," cried Roger. "Do not be frightened by anything that priest may have said to you. Though my wife's confessor is a man to be feared for his power in the Congregation, if he should try to blight our happiness I would find means——"

"What could you do?"

"We would go to Italy; I would fly——"

A shriek that rang out from the adjoining room made Roger start and Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille quake; but she rushed into the drawing-room, and there found Madame de Granville in a dead faint. When the Countess recovered her senses, she sighed deeply on

finding herself supported by the Count and her rival, whom she instinctively pushed away with a gesture of contempt. Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille rose to withdraw.

"You are at home, Madame," said Granville, taking Caroline by the arm. "Stay."

The Judge took up his wife in his arms, carried her to the carriage, and got into it with her.

"Who is it that has brought you to the point of wishing me dead, of resolving to fly?" asked the Countess, looking at her husband with grief mingled with indignation. "Was I not young? you thought me pretty—what fault have you to find with me? Have I been false to you? Have I not been a virtuous and well-conducted wife? My heart has cherished no image but yours, my ears have listened to no other voice. What duty have I failed in? What have I ever denied you?"

"Happiness, Madame," said the Count severely. "You know, Madame, that there are two ways of serving God. Some Christians imagine that by going to church at fixed hours to say a *Paternoster,* by attending Mass regularly and avoiding sin, they may win heaven—but they, Madame, will go to hell; they have not loved God for Himself, they have not worshiped Him as He chooses to be worshiped, they have made no sacrifice. Though mild in seeming, they are hard on their neighbors; they see the law, the letter, not the spirit.—This is how you have treated me, your earthly husband; you have sacrificed my happiness to your salvation; you were always absorbed in prayer when I came to you in gladness of heart; you wept when you should have cheered my toil; you have never tried to satisfy any demands I have made on you."

"And if they were wicked," cried the Countess hotly, "was I to lose my soul to please you?"

"It is a sacrifice which another, a more loving woman, has dared to make," said Granville coldly.

"Dear God!" she cried, bursting into tears, "Thou hearest! Has he been worthy of the prayers and penance I have lived in, wearing myself out to atone for his sins and my own?—Of what avail is virtue?"

"To win heaven, my dear. A woman cannot be at the same time the wife of a man and the spouse of Christ. That would be bigamy; she must choose between a husband and a nunnery. For the sake of future advantage you have stripped your soul of all the love, all the devotion, which God commands that you should have for me, you have cherished no feeling but hatred——"

"Have I not loved you?" she put in.

"No, Madame."

"Then what is love?" the Countess involuntarily inquired.

"Love, my dear," replied Granville, with a sort of ironical surprise, "you are incapable of understanding it. The cold sky of Normandy is not that of Spain. This difference of climate is no doubt the secret of our disaster.—To yield to our caprices, to guess them, to find pleasure in pain, to sacrifice the world's opinion, your pride, your religion even, and still regard these offerings as mere grains of incense burnt in honor of the idol—that is love——"

"The love of ballet-girls!" cried the Countess in horror. "Such flames cannot

last, and must soon leave nothing but ashes and cinders, regret or despair. A wife, Monsieur, ought, in my opinion, to bring you true friendship, equable warmth——"

"You speak of warmth as negroes speak of ice," retorted the Count, with a sardonic smile. "Consider that the humblest daisy has more charms than the proudest and most gorgeous of the red hawthorns that attract us in spring by their strong scent and brilliant color. —At the same time," he went on, "I will do you justice. You have kept so precisely in the strait path of imaginary duty prescribed by law, that only to make you understand wherein you have failed towards me, I should be obliged to enter into details which would offend your dignity, and instruct you in matters which would seem to you to undermine all morality."

"And you dare to speak of morality when you have but just left the house where you have dissipated your children's fortune in debaucheries?" cried the Countess, maddened by her husband's reticence.

"There, Madame, I must correct you," said the Count, coolly interrupting his wife. "Though Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille is rich, it is at nobody's expense. My uncle was master of his fortune, and had several heirs. In his life-time, and out of pure friendship, regarding her as his niece, he gave her the little estate of Bellefeuille. As for anything else, I owe it to his liberality——"

"Such conduct is only worthy of a Jacobin!" said the sanctimonious Angélique.

"Madame, you are forgetting your own father was one of the Jacobins you scorn so uncharitably," said the Count severely. "Citizen Bontems was signing death-warrants at a time when my uncle was doing France good service."

Madame de Granville was silenced. But after a short pause, the remembrance of what she had just seen reawakened in her soul the jealousy which nothing can kill in a woman's heart, and she murmured, as if to herself—"How can a woman thus destroy her own soul and that of others?"

"Bless me, Madame," replied the Count, tired of this dialogue, "you yourself may some day have to answer that question." The Countess was scared. "You perhaps will be held excused by the merciful Judge, who will weigh our sins," he went on, "in consideration of the conviction with which you have worked out my misery. I do not hate you—I hate those who have perverted your heart and your reason. You have prayed for me, just as Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille has given me her heart and crowned my life with love. You should have been my mistress and the prayerful saint by turns.—Do me the justice to confess that I am no reprobate, no debauchee. My life was cleanly. Alas! after seven years of wretchedness, the craving for happiness led me by an imperceptible descent to love another woman and make a second home. And do not imagine that I am singular; there are in this city thousands of husbands, all led by various causes to live this twofold life."

"Great God!" cried the Countess. "How heavy is the cross Thou hast laid on me to bear! If the husband Thou hast given me here below in Thy wrath

can only be made happy through my death, take me to Thyself!"

"If you had always breathed such admirable sentiments and such devotion, we should be happy yet," said the Count coldly.

"Indeed," cried Angélique, melting into a flood of tears, "forgive me if I have done any wrong. Yes, Monsieur, I am ready to obey you in all things, feeling sure that you will desire nothing but what is just and natural; henceforth I will be all you can wish your wife to be."

"If your purpose, Madame, is to compel me to say that I no longer love you, I shall find the cruel courage to tell you so. Can I command my heart? Can I wipe out in an instant the traces of fifteen years of suffering?—I have ceased to love.—These words contain a mystery as deep as lies in the words *I love.* Esteem, respect, friendship may be won, lost, regained; but as to love—I might school myself for a thousand years, and it would not blossom again, especially for a woman too old to respond to it."

"I hope, Monsieur le Comte, I sincerely hope, that such words may not be spoken to you some day by the woman you love, and in such a tone and accent——"

"Will you put on a dress *à la Greçque* this evening, and come to the Opera?"

The shudder with which the Countess received the suggestion was a mute reply.

Early in December 1833, a man, whose perfectly white hair and worn features seemed to show that he was aged by grief rather than by years, was walking at midnight along the Rue Gaillon. Having reached a house of modest appearance, and only two stories high, he paused to look up at one of the attic windows that pierced the roof at regular intervals. A dim light scarcely showed through the humble panes, some of which had been repaired with paper. The man below was watching the wavering glimmer with the vague curiosity of a Paris idler, when a young man came out of the house. As the light of the street lamp fell full on the face of the first comer, it will not seem surprising that, in spite of the darkness, this young man went towards the passerby, though with the hesitancy that is usual when we have any fear of making a mistake in recognizing an acquaintance.

"What, is it you," cried he, "Monsieur le Président? Alone at this hour, and so far from the Rue Saint-Lazare. Allow me to have the honor of giving you my arm.—The pavement is so greasy this morning, that if we do not hold each other up," he added, to soothe the elder man's susceptibilities, "we shall find it hard to escape a tumble."

"But, my dear sir, I am no more than fifty-five, unfortunately for me," replied the Comte de Granville. "A physician of your celebrity must know that at that age a man is still hale and strong."

"Then you are in waiting on a lady, I suppose," replied Horace Bianchon. "You are not, I imagine, in the habit of going about Paris on foot. When a man keeps such fine horses——"

"Still, when I am not visiting in the evening, I commonly return from the Courts or the club on foot," replied the Count.

"And with large sums of money about you, perhaps!" cried the doctor. "It is a

positive invitation to the assassin's knife."

"I am not afraid of that," said Granville, with melancholy indifference.

"But, at least, do not stand about," said the doctor, leading the Count towards the boulevard. "A little more and I shall believe that you are bent on robbing me of your last illness, and dying by some other hand than mine."

"You caught me playing the spy," said the Count. "Whether on foot or in a carriage, and whatever hour of the night I may come by, I have for some time past observed at a window on the third floor of your house the shadow of a person who seems to work with heroic constancy."

The Count paused as if he felt some sudden pain. "And I take as great interest in that garret," he went on, "as a citizen of Paris must feel in the finishing of the Palais Royal."

"Well," said Horace Bianchon eagerly. "I can tell you——"

"Tell me nothing," replied Granville, cutting the doctor short. "I would not give a centime to know whether the shadow that moves across that shabby blind is that of a man or a woman, nor whether the inhabitant of that attic is happy or miserable. Though I was surprised to see no one at work there this evening, and though I stopped to look, it was solely for the pleasure of indulging in conjectures as numerous and as idiotic as those of idlers who see a building left half finished. For nine years, my young"—the Count hesitated to use a word; then he waved his hand, exclaiming—"No, I will not say friend—I hate everything that savors of sentiment.—Well, for nine years past I have ceased to wonder that old men amuse themselves with growing flowers and planting trees; the events of life have taught them disbelief in all human affection; and I grew old within a few days. I will no longer attach myself to any creature but to unreasoning animals, or plants, or superficial things. I think more of Taglioni's grace than of all human feeling. I abhor life and the world in which I live alone. Nothing, nothing," he went on, in a tone that startled the younger man, "no, nothing can move or interest me."

"But you have children?"

"My children!" he repeated bitterly. "Yes—well, is not my eldest daughter the Comtesse de Vandenesse? The other will, through her sister's connections, make some good match. As to my sons, have they not succeeded? The Vicomte was public prosecutor at Limoges, and is now President of the Court at Orleans; the younger is public prosecutor in Paris.—My children have their own cares, their own anxieties and business to attend to. If of all those hearts one had been devoted to me, if one had tried by entire affection to fill up the void I have here," and he struck his breast, "well, that one would have failed in life, have sacrificed it to me. And why should he? Why? To bring sunshine into my few remaining years—and would he have succeeded? Might I not have accepted such generosity as a debt? But, doctor," and the Count smiled with deep irony, "it is not for nothing that we teach them arithmetic and how to count. At this moment perhaps they are waiting for my money."

"Oh, Monsieur le Comte, how could such an idea enter your head—you who

are kind, friendly, and humane! Indeed, if I were not myself a living proof of the benevolence you exercise so liberally and so nobly——"

"To please myself," replied the Count. "I pay for a sensation, as I would tomorrow pay a pile of gold to recover the most childish illusion that would but make my heart glow.—I help my fellow-creatures for my own sake, just as I gamble; and I look for gratitude from none. I should see you die without blinking; and I beg of you to feel the same with regard to me. I tell you, young man, the events of life have swept over my hreart like the lavas of Vesuvius over Herculaneum. The town is there—dead."

"Those who have brought a soul warm and living as yours was to such a pitch of indifference are indeed guilty!"

"Say no more," said the Count, shuddering with aversion.

"You have a malady which you ought to allow me to treat," said Bianchon in a tone of deep emotion.

"What, do you know of a cure for death?" cried the Count irritably.

"I undertake, Monsieur le Comte, to revive the heart you believe to be frozen."

"Are you a match for Talma, then?" asked the Count satirically.

"No, Monsieur le Comte. But Nature is as far above Talma as Talma is superior to me.—Listen; the garret you are interested in is inhabited by a woman of about thirty, and in her love is carried to fanaticism. The object of her adoration is a young man of pleasing appearance, but endowed by some malignant fairy with every conceivable vice. This fellow is a gambler, and it is hard to say which he is most addicted to—wine or women; he has, to my knowledge, committed acts deserving punishment by law. Well, and to him this unhappy woman sacrificed a life of ease, a man who worshiped her, and the father of her children.—But what is wrong, Monsieur le Comte?"

"Nothing. Go on."

"She has allowed him to squander a perfect fortune; she would, I believe, give him the world if she had it; she works night and day; and many a time she has, without a murmur, seen the wretch she adores rob her even of the money saved to buy the clothes the children need, and their food for the morrow. Only three days ago she sold her hair, the finest hair I ever saw; he came in, she could not hide the gold piece quickly enough, and he asked her for it. For a smile, for a kiss, she gave up the price of a fortnight's life and peace. Is it not dreadful, and yet sublime?—But work is wearing her cheeks hollow. Her children's crying has broken her heart; she is ill, and at this moment moaning on her wretched bed. This evening they had nothing to eat; the children have not strength to cry, they were silent when I went up."

Horace Bianchon stood still. Just then the Comte de Granville, in spite of himself, as it were, had put his hand into his waistcoat pocket.

"I can guess, my young friend, how it is that she is yet alive if you attend her," said the elder man.

"Oh, poor soul!" cried the doctor, "who could refuse to help her? I only wish I were richer, for I hope to cure her of her passion."

"But how can you except me to pity

a form of misery of which the joys to me would seem cheaply purchased with my whole fortune!" exclaimed the Count, taking his hand out of his pocket empty of the notes which Bianchon had supposed his patron to be feeling for. "That woman feels, she is alive! Would not Louis XV. have given his kingdom to rise from the grave and have three days of youth and life! And is not that the history of thousands of dead men, thousands of sick men, thousands of old men?"

"Poor Caroline!" cried Bianchon.

As he heard the name the Count shuddered, and grasped the doctor's arm with the grip of an iron vice, as it seemed to Bianchon.

"Her name is Caroline Crochard?" asked the Président, in a voice that was evidently broken.

"Then you know her?" said the doctor, astonished.

"And the wretch's name is Solvet.—Ay, you have kept your word!" exclaimed Granville; "you have roused my heart to the most terrible pain it can suffer till it is dust. That emotion, too, is a gift from hell, and I always know how to pay those debts."

By this time the Count and the doctor had reached the corner of the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. One of those night-birds who wander round with a basket on their back and crook in hand, and were, during the Revolution, facetiously called the Committee of Research, was standing by the curbstone where the two men now stopped. This scavenger had a shriveled face worthy of those immortalized by Charlet in his caricatures of the sweepers of Paris.

"Do you ever pick up a thousand-franc note?"

"Now and then, master."

"And you restore them?"

"It depends on the reward offered."

"You're the man for me," cried the Count, giving the man a thousand-franc note. "Take this, but, remember, I give it you on condition of your spending it at the wineshop, of your getting drunk, fighting, beating your wife, blacking your friends' eyes. That will give work to the watch, the surgeon, the druggist—perhaps to the police, the public prosecutor, the judge, and the prison warders. Do not try to do anything else, or the devil will be revenged on you sooner or later."

A draughtsman would need at once the pencil of Charlet and of Callot, the brush of Teniers and of Rembrandt, to give a true notion of this night-scene.

"Now I have squared accounts with hell, and had some pleasure for my money," said the Count in a deep voice, pointing out the indescribable physiognomy of the gaping scavenger to the doctor, who stood stupefied. "As for Caroline Crochard!—she may die of hunger and thirst, hearing the heart-rending shrieks of her starving children, and convinced of the baseness of the man she loves. I will not give a sou to rescue her; and because you have helped her, I will see you no more——"

The Count left Bianchon standing like a statue, and walked as briskly as a young man to the Rue Saint-Lazare, soon reaching the little house where he resided, and where, to his surprise, he found a carriage waiting at the door.

"Monsieur, your son, the attorney-general, came about an hour since," said

the manservant, "and is waiting for you in your bedroom."

Granville signed to the man to leave him.

"What motive can be strong enough to require you to infringe the order I have given my children never to come to me unless I send for them?" asked the Count of his son as he went into the room.

"Father," replied the younger man in a tremulous voice, and with great respect, "I venture to hope that you will forgive me when you have heard me."

"Your reply is proper," said the Count. "Sit down," and he pointed to a chair. "But whether I walk up and down, or take a seat, speak without heeding me."

"Father," the son went on, "this afternoon, at four o'clock, a very young man who was arrested in the house of a friend of mine, whom he had robbed to a considerable extent, appealed to you.—He says he is your son."

"His name?" asked the Count hoarsely.

"Charles Crochard."

"That will do," said the father, with an imperious wave of the hand.

Granville paced the room in solemn silence, and his son took care not to break it.

"My son," he began, and the words were pronounced in a voice so mild and fatherly, that the young lawyer started, "Charles Crochard spoke the truth.—I am glad you came to me to-night, my good Eugène," he added. "Here is a considerable sum of money"—and he gave him a bundle of bank-notes—"you can make any use of them you think proper in this matter. I trust you implicitly, and approve beforehand whatever arrangements you may make, either in the present or for the future.—Eugène, my dear son, kiss me. We part perhaps for the last time. I shall tomorrow crave my dismissal from the King, and I am going to Italy.

"Though a father owes no account of his life to his children, he is bound to bequeath to them the experience Fate sells him so dearly—is it not a part of their inheritance?—When you marry," the Count went on, with a little involuntary shiver, "do not undertake it lightly; that act is the most important of all those which society requires of us. Remember to study at your leisure the character of the woman who is to be your partner; but consult me too, I will judge of her myself. A lack of union between husband and wife, from whatever cause, leads to terrible misfortune; sooner or later we are always punished for contravening the social law.—But I will write to you on this subject from Florence. A father who has the honor of presiding over a supreme court of justice must not have to blush in the presence of his son. Good-by."

Gambara

To M. le Marquis de Belloy

New Year's Day 1831 was throwing around its packets of sugared-almonds; four o'clock was striking; great crowds thronged the Palais-Royal, and the restaurants were filling up. At this time a coupé stopped at the entrance and a young man of noble bearing alighted; a foreigner undoubtedly, or he would not have had as attendant an aristocratic chasseur wearing a plumed hat, neither would the panels have displayed the coat-of-arms, which the heroes of July still sought for the purpose of attack.

Our stranger entered the Palais-Royal and followed the crowd around the wooden galleries, evidently not caring to notice the slow progression he was compelled to make by the sauntering mass of humanity; he seemed born to the noble gait, called in derision the "ambassadors' strut," and yet his dignity had a touch of the theatrical. Although his face was grave and handsome, his hat, under which showed a mass of black, curling hair, tipped the least bit too much over his right ear, belying his gravity with a touch of rakishness. His inattentive, half-closed eyes let fall an occasional contemptuous glance upon the crowd.

"There's a handsome young fellow," said a grisette to another one in her company, as they drew aside to let him pass.

"And right well he knows it, too," responded aloud the companion, who was very plain.

After having made a turn through the arcades, the young man alternately looked at his watch and at the sky; he seemed to be impatient, and at last went into a tobacconist's store, lit a cigar, and stood for a moment before the mirror to glance over his apparel, which was more ornate than the French law of good taste could tolerate. He pulled down his collar and black velvet vest, over which hung many festoons of those heavy gold chains made in Genoa; then, with one jerk of his left shoulder, he satisfactorily arranged his velvet-lined cloak in graceful folds, and resumed his promenade, paying not the slightest attention to the glances of the inquisitive bourgeois.

When the store windows began to be illuminated and the dusk seemed dark enough, he walked to the open square of the Palais-Royal with an appearance of avoiding recognition; he kept close to the wall as far as the fountain, under cover of the hackney-coaches, to thus reach the entrance of the Rue Froidmanteau, a dirty, dark, and disreputable street—a moral sewer which the police tolerate near the purified precincts of the Palais-Royal, the same as an Italian major-domo allows a negligent servant to leave the sweepings from a suite of rooms in a corner of the staircase.

The young man hesitated. He had something of the air of a middle-class wife in her Sunday best clothes when she fears to cross a gutter swollen by the rain; yet the hour was not ill-chosen in which to indulge some questionable whim. Earlier in the day he might have been detected; later, he might be cut out. To have been tempted by a glance more encouraging than alluring; to have

followed a young and pretty woman for an hour, perhaps for a day; to set her on a pedestal in his own mind, giving a thousand flattering excuses for her light conduct; to find one's self believing in a sudden, irresistible affinity; to imagine under the flame of a passing excitement the beginning of a love-adventure at an epoch when romances are written because there no longer exists the slightest trace of romance; to have dreamed of balconies, guitars, stratagems, and bolts and Almaviva's mantle; to have written, in fancy, a poem in honor of this divinity; and, after all this, to stop at the door of a house of ill-fame; to find in the decorum of his Rosina a reticence enforced by the police, is surely a history, a delusion; is it not, I ask, an experience of many a man, much as he would desire to deny it?

Our most natural feeling we confess the least willingly; chiefest is self-conceit. When the lesson goes no further than the door, a Parisian profits by it or forgets it; so no great harm is done. With a foreigner, though, this is not so; he begins to think his Parisian education may cost him altogether too dear.

The saunterer was a noble of Milan, banished his country, where some pranks of liberalism had led the Austrian government to suspect him. The Comte Andrea Marcosini had been welcomed in Paris with that French cordiality always shown to one of a witty, amiable nature and of a high-sounding name, especially so when accompanied by an income of two hundred thousand francs a year and a prepossessing appearance. To such a man exile meant but a pleasure tour; his property was only sequestrated, and his friends took means to let him know that after the course of a year or two he could return to his own country without risk.

After rhyming *crudelli affami* with *i miei tiranni* in a dozen or so sonnets, after also assisting as many of the poorer Italian refugees, Comte Andrea, who for his misfortune was born a poet, thought himself released from patriotic concerns. So since his arrival he had given himself up without discretion to the pleasures of every kind that Paris so kindly offers gratis to everybody who may be rich enough to buy them. His talents and attractive person won him success with many women, whom he collectively loved, as was natural to his age, but among all of whom he had, as yet, not selected a particular one. Beside, in him the taste for such pleasures was subordinate to the love of music and poetry, gifts which he had assiduously cultivated since childhood; he thought success in these realms more difficult of attainment and more glorious than the triumphs of gallantry, since nature had spared him the difficulties which most other men take pride in vanquishing.

Of a complex nature, like many another man, he let himself be charmed by the comforts of luxury, without which he could hardly have lived; he held just as tenaciously to the social distinctions rejected by his political creed. Thus his theories as an artist, a thinker, and a poet were often in direct contradiction to his tastes, his feelings, and his habits as an opulent man of rank; but he consoled himself for this seeming inconsistency by recognizing the same traits in many Parisians—men who are Liberals from self-interest and aristocrats by nature.

Hence it was not without some misgivings that he found himself on foot, on December 31st, in a thaw, following at the heels of a woman whose dress betrayed abject poverty—an inveterate, long-accustomed poverty—and who was not one whit handsomer than others to be seen on any evening at the Bouffons, the opera, or in society, and she certainly was not as handsome as Mme. de Manerville, with whom he had an assignation that self-same day, and who, most probably, was at that moment awaiting him.

But there was a something in the glance, half-wild, half-tender, rapid yet intense, which that woman's block eyes had furtively shot at him; a world of buried sorrows and stifled delights was there; she blushed so fiercely when, emerging from a store where she had lingered a little while, her eyes met those of Marcosini, who was outside awaiting her return, but her look met that of the Count with equal candor. There were, in short, so many incentives to curiosity that the Count, seized by one of those crazy temptations for which no language has a name, not even in that of the orgy, followed in pursuit of the woman exactly as an old Parisian runs a grisette to earth.

As he went along, sometimes before, sometimes in her rear, he examined the details of her person and dress; he tried to dislodge the absurd and frenzied desire that had taken possession of his brain; but soon his scrutiny felt a keener pleasure than he had experienced the day before as he stood gazing at the perfect shape of a woman he loved, as she took her bath. Sometimes the unknown fair, bending her head, would throw on him a glance like that of a kid tethered with its head near the ground; then, still finding him in pursuit, she hurried on as if to escape him. Nevertheless, when a block caused by carriages or persons crowded together brought Andrea beside her, he saw that she turned away from his gaze without any sign of annoyance. These signals of repressed emotions spurred on the unruly dreams which were running away with him, and he gave them a free rein as far as the Rue Froidmanteau, down which, after many windings, she suddenly disappeared, trusting that her pursuer would thus find the scent killed for him; he was astonished at this move and had lost trace of her.

It was dark. Two highly rouged women, who were drinking a liqueur of black-currant in a grocery, saw the young woman and called to her. She paused a moment on the threshold, replied to their greeting by a few gentle words and passed on. Andrea, who was close behind her, saw her vanish in one of the darkest courts in the street, of which he knew not the name. The repulsive appearance of the house which the heroine of his romance had entered turned his stomach. He stepped back a few paces to examine the surroundings, when, finding a villainous-looking fellow at his elbow, he asked for information. The man rested one hand on a knotty stick, and ironically answered in two words:

"Droll dog!"

But catching a full view of the Italian, who stood in the light of a street lamp, his face suddenly assumed a wheedling expression.

"Ah! your excuses, monsieur," said he, at once changing his tune; "there's a

restaurant in that house, a kind of table-d'hôte is there served, where the cooking is horribly bad and they put cheese in the soup. Monsieur, perhaps, is in search of that place—for it is easy to see that monsieur is an Italian—and Italians are fond of velvet and cheese. If monsieur would like to know of a better eating-house, I can show him one; my aunt lives near by, and she is very fond of foreigners."

Andrea drew his cloak as high as his nose and rushed out of the street, driven by the disgust he felt for this filthy creature, whose clothing and gestures were in keeping with the squalid house into which the unknown woman had disappeared. He returned with delight to the comforts and elegances of his suite of rooms, and passed the evening with the Marquise d'Espard, to cleanse himself, if possible, of the pollution of the fancy that had taken such hold upon him.

Nevertheless, afterward when he was in bed, in the silence of the night, his evening vision arose before him, brighter, clearer, more vividly than the reality. Before him walked his divinity; at times as she crossed the street gutters she slightly raised her dress and displayed a shapely leg; and her beautifully molded hips swayed at every step. Once more Andrea wished to speak to her and dared not. He, Marcosini, a noble of Milan! Then he saw her once more enter the dark court and the wretched house, and blamed himself for not following her farther.

"For," said he to himself, "if it was that she avoided me and tried to put me off the scent, surely it is a sign of her loving me. With women of this kind coyness is proof of love. Possibly, though, if I had gone further with the adventure it might have ended in disgust. I'll just sleep in peace."

The Count was in the habit of analyzing his keenest sensations, as all men born with a good headpiece involuntarily do when their brain equals their heart; he was greatly surprised to still find himself thinking of the strange damsel, not in the ideal glamour of a vision, but in all the reality of the naked facts. And yet, if his fancy had stripped her of the misery of wretchedness, the woman herself would have been spoilt for him; for he wanted her, he desired her; he loved her—muddy stockings, broken shoes, her battered straw bonnet, all! He longed for her in that very house which he had seen her enter.

"Am I then enamored of vice?" he asked himself with horror. "Nay, I have not come to that, I am but three-and-twenty; there is nothing of the senile stage about me."

The very vehemence of the caprice of which he was the plaything seemed to somewhat reassure him. This curious struggle, these reflections, this love on a run may be an enigma to some persons who imagine they know the ways of Paris; but let such bear in mind that Comte Andrea Marcosini was not a Frenchman.

Brought up as he was by two pious abbés, by the instruction of a pious father, who had seldom permitted him out of their sight, Andrea had not fallen in love with a cousin at eleven, nor had he seduced his mother's waiting-maid at twelve; he had not studied at those colleges where the most consummate teaching is not prescribed by the State; he had lived in Paris but a short time,

and he was yet on the watch against those sudden and deep impressions against which the education and customs of a French education are such a powerful ægis.

In Southern lands great passions are often born at a glance. A Gascon gentleman who had tempered his sensibility by deep reflection, and owned a horde of little recipes against the sudden apoplexies of the head and heart, had one day advised Marcosini to indulge at least once a month in a wild sensual orgy, so he might avert those storms of the soul which, without such precautions, were apt to burst forth at inconvenient times. Andrea well remembered this advice, and, as he sank to sleep, muttered to himself:

"Well, I'll begin to-morrow, January the 1st."

This will explain why it was that the Comte Andrea Marcosini so furtively skirted the line of hackney-coaches to get at the entrance of the Rue Froidmanteau. The man of fashion hampered the lover; he hesitated for some time, but, after a final appeal to his courage, the lover advanced with a firm step to the house, which he easily recognized. There he again stopped. Was the woman what he took her to be? Might it not be that he was about taking a false step?

Just then he recollected the Italian table-d'hôte, and eagerly jumped at the middle course thus offered, and which seemed like to serve the ends of his desires and his repugnance.

He entered the place, intending to dine there; he made his way down a greasy passage, at the end of which he found, after groping about for some time, the damp and slimy steps of a stairway, and which, to an Italian nobleman, must have seemed little more than a ladder.

Attracted to the second floor by the light of a lamp placed on the floor, and by a strong scent of cooking, he pushed a door which stood ajar, and saw a large room dingy with smoke and grease, where a woman was engaged laying a table for about twenty customers. None of the guests had as yet arrived.

Glancing around the ill-lighted room, where the paper hung in strips from the wall, the nobleman seated himself near a stove which rumbled and smoked in a corner.

The major-domo of the place, attracted by the noise the Count made in entering, now hustled into the room. Picture to yourself a thin, lank cook, very tall, blessed with a nose of extravagant dimensions, casting about him from time to time a feverish glance that he intended to seem cautious. At sight of Andrea, whose dress and appearance bespoke affluence, Signor Giardini bowed respectfully.

The Count expressed an intention of habitually dining there with his compatriots; he paid for a number of tickets in advance, and gave a friendly tone to the conversation to enable him to achieve his purpose the quicker.

He had scarcely alluded to the woman he was seeking than Signor Giardini made a grotesque gesture, looked knowingly at his customer with a wink, and let a smile curl his lip.

"Basta!" he exclaimed. *"Caprisco!* You, signor, are brought hither by two appetites. The Signora Gambara will not have wasted her time if she has managed to interest a gentleman so generous as you seem to be. I can tell

you in one word all that we know here of the woman, who is truly to be pitied.

"The husband was born, I think, at Cremona, but he came here from Germany, quite recently. He has been endeavoring to get the *Tedeschi* to try some new music and a new kind of instrument. It is pitiable, eh?" exclaimed Giardini, shrugging his shoulders. "Signor Gambara, who believes himself a great composer, does not seem to me to be particularly smart in other directions. A fine fellow enough, occasionally good-natured, full of common sense and wit, especially when he has drunk a glass or two of good wine—a not frequent occurrence, for he is frightfully poor. He toils night and day in composing imaginary operas instead of working for a living as he should do. His poor wife is reduced to working for all sorts of people, prostitutes and the like—sewing she does. Well, it can't be helped, she loves her husband like a father and cares for him like a baby.

"Lots of young men have come here to dine in hopes of being able to pay court to madame, but no one has as yet succeeded," he said, with a significant emphasis on the last word. "La Signora Marianna is virtuous, sir; much too virtuous for her own good, worse luck. Nowadays men give nothing for nothing. The poor creature will die in poverty.

"You would naturally suppose that her husband would reward such fine devotion, wouldn't you? Bah, he doesn't even give her one smile. The cooking is done at the bakery, for, see you, this devil of a husband never earns a sou, but he spends his whole time in making instruments, which he cuts and lengthens, and shortens and fits, and sets up and takes to pieces again till they give out squeaks that would scare a cat; then only is he happy. And yet you will find him the kindest and gentlest of men; he's not a bit lazy, no indeed, he's always busy. To speak truth, he's mad and doesn't know it. I have seen monsieur filing and forging those instruments of his and chewing away on his black bread with an appetite that I have often envied—I, monsieur, who keep the best table in Paris.

"Your excellenza shall learn before an hour passes over your head the man I am. I have introduced a number of refinements into Italian cookery that will amaze you. Excellenza, I am Neapolitan, which is saying, a born cook. But of what good is instinct without science? Science? I have spent thirty years in acquiring it. See, then, to what it has brought me! My history is that of every man of talent. My efforts, my experiments, have ruined three restaurants in succession—one at Naples, the others at Parma and Rome. Again reduced in this city to making a trade of my art, I practice in my ruling passion more than before. Some of my finest ragouts I give to these poor refugees. I ruin myself. Folly! you would say? I know this, but, then, can I help myself? Genius is stronger than I; is it possible I can restrain myself from creating a dish that smilingly allures me? And they always know it, the scallawags! I can make oath to you that they know at once whether it was my wife or I who handled the ladles.

"And what now is the consequence? Out of the sixty or more guests whom I used to see at my table-d'hôte every day when I first opened this wretched

place, barely twenty remain, and most of these want credit.

"The Piedmontese, the Savoyards, have quit me, but the persons of taste, the Italians proper, remain. And for these what sacrifices would I not make! I often give them a dinner at five-and-twenty sous a head that has cost me double that to prepare."

Signor Giardini's little speech was so redolent of Neapolitan cunning that the Count was tickled immensely; he could have fancied himself back at Gerolamo's.

"If such be the case, my good host," said he familiarly to the chef, "and since accident, chance, and your good-nature have let me into the secrets of your daily sacrifices, permit me the honor of paying double."

Thus speaking, Andrea flung a forty-franc piece on the table, out of which Signor Giardini solemnly returned him two francs and fifty centimes in change, with a mysterious ceremony which enchanted the young man.

"In a few minutes," continued the signor, "you shall behold your *donnina*. I'll seat you next the husband; if you wish to get in his good graces, talk music; I have invited both of them for this evening, poor souls. For New Year's Day celebration I have prepared a dish for my guests in which I may say that I have surpassed myself."

The words of Signor Giardini were drowned in the noisy greetings of the said company, who streamed in singly or in pairs, irregularly, after the manner of tables-d'hôte. Giardini stood ostentatiously by the Count and pointed out to him the regular company. He was liberal with his quips and quirks, and tried by his humorous remarks to bring a smile to the lips of this man who, as his Neapolitan instinct assured him, was a wealthy patron who might be turned to account.

"That man," said he, "is a poor composer who would much like to leave the ballad line for the realm of opera; but he can't. He abuses managers, music publishers, everybody but himself, who is his own greatest enemy. Don't you catch on to his rubescent complexion, what jolly self-conceit, how little firmness he displays? He's only cut out for a ballad-monger, and nothing else. The other man in his company, who looks like a match-vendor, is a great musical celebrity, Gigelmi—the greatest of Italian conductors. But he is now going deaf, and is ending his days most miserably, deprived as he is of all that is attractive to him. Ah! and here comes our Ottoboni the great, the most guileless old fellow on earth; and yet he is suspected of being the most vindictive of all those who are plotting for the regeneration of Italy. I should dearly like to know why ever they banished such a mild old gentleman——"

Here Giardini looked closely at the Count, who, aware that he was being pumped on the political question, kept an impassibility that was truly Italian.

"A man who cooks for all the world is denied political opinions, excellenza," went on this culinary genius. "But anyone seeing that worthy man, who looks more the lamb than the lion, would say as I do about him, even to the Austrian ambassador himself. Beside all, at this day liberty is no longer proscribed; it is *en route* again! At least that's what these good people here present fancy," he whispered in the Count's ear. "and I,

why should I daunt their hopes? Though I myself do not hate an absolute government.

"All great talent is for absolutism. Well, though Ottoboni is choke-full of genius, he expends time and trouble in teaching Italy; he writes little books to teach the minds of children and the laboring classes, and he very cleverly gets them smuggled into Italy; he adopts every means to awaken a moral sense in our unlucky native land, where, after all, enjoyment is more desired than liberty —it may be they are right."

The Count still retained his impassiveness, and the cook was unable to learn any of his political opinions.

"Ottoboni," he went on, "is a saint; very benevolent and helpful; all the refugees love him, for you must know, excellenza, that even a Liberal may have his virtues. Ah! here we have a journalist!" he exclaimed, interrupting himself, and pointing out a man who wore the attire generally attributed, perhaps more conventionally than truthfully, to the garret poet; his coat was threadbare, his shoes cracked, his hat shiny, his overcoat in senile decay. "Excellenza, that poor man is full of talent and incorruptibly honest! He was born in a wrong age! he tells the truth to the whole world; people detest him. He is the theatrical critic of two little journals, though he is smart enough to write for the great dailies. Poor fellow!

"The others are beneath your notice; your excellency will easily learn about them without my help," he hastily added, perceiving that the Count was no longer paying attention to him, as the wife of the composer entered the room.

Seeing Andrea there, Signora Marianna visibly started and a blush tinged her cheeks.

"Here he is," said Giardini in an undertone, pressing the Count's arm and motioning to a man of tall stature. "See how pale and grave he is, poor man! His hobby is evidently not cantering to his mind to-day."

Andrea's love-dream of Marianna was suddenly overpowered by the captivating grace which Gambara's presence exercised over every true lover of art. The composer was forty; but although his high forehead, from which the hair had flown, was furrowed with a few wrinkles, not deep, but in parallel lines, and in spite of the hollow temples where the blue veins showed through the clear, transparent skin, and of the sunken orbits of his dark eyes surmounted by heavy lids and light-colored lashes, the lower part of his face made him still appear young, so calm were the lips, so tranquil the outline. It could be recognized at a glance that in this man passion had been curbed to the advantage of the intellect; that he would only grow old from mental struggle.

Andrea stole a rapid glance at Marianna, who was watching him. The sight of her glorious Italian head, the exquisite proportion and rich coloring, revealed an organization where all the human forces were symmetrically balanced; he sounded the gulf which separated this pair accidentally joined together. More than pleased with this evidence of dissimilarity between husband and wife, he no longer combated the feelings which drew him to Marianna. But for the man whose only blessing she was, he already felt a touch of respectful pity, seeing, as he could not

help doing, the dignified and serene acceptance of ill-fortune that was expressed in Gambara's melancholy and mild eyes.

Expecting to find, from Giardini's description, one of those grotesque beings so often set before us by German novelists and libretto poets, instead he found, to his great astonishment, a simple, reserved man, whose manner and demeanor were aught but eccentric, and possessed a dignity all their own. The dress of the musician, though it showed no trace whatever of luxury, was more seemly than his extreme poverty would lead one to expect, while his linen bore testimony to the tender care which watched over even the minor details of his being.

Andrea raised his moistened eyes to Marianna, who did not blush, though a half-smile curled her lips, perhaps called forth by the pride she felt in the young man's mute homage. Too seriously fascinated not to watch for the slightest indication that his feelings were returned, the Count began to fancy himself beloved by her because he saw that she comprehended him. From this moment he set himself to the conquest of the husband rather than of the wife, directing all his batteries against poor Gambara, who unsuspectingly went on eating the *bocconi* of Signor Giardini without knowing their taste.

The Count opened the conversation with some general remark; but from the first he was conscious that the man's intellect, supposedly blind on one point at least, was extraordinarily clear-sighted on all others, and he saw that it would be far more important to understand his ideas than to attempt any flattery of his whims.

The remainder of the guests, a hungry crew, whose wits were only sharpened by the sight of a dinner, were it good or bad, betrayed a positive animosity to Gambara, and only waited the end of the first course to give vent to their satire. One refugee, whose frequent leers showed an ambitious scheme in connection with Marianna, and who seemed to fancy that he could intrench himself in her good graces by making her husband ridiculous, opened fire by trying to explain to Marcosini the lay of the land of the table-d'hôte.

"It is quite a long time since we have heard anything about the opera of *Mahomet*," he exclaimed, smiling at Marianna. "Can it be that Paolo Gambara is wholly given up to domestic affairs, the charms of the *pot-au-feu*,[1] and so neglects his superhuman genius, thus allowing his talent to grow cold and his imagination to stale?"

Gambara knew all the company; he felt that he lived in a sphere high above them; he therefore no longer took the trouble to repel their attacks, he made no answer.

"It is not given to everybody," said the journalist, "to have an intellect that can comprehend the musical efforts of M. Gambara; it is for this reason, doubtless, that our divine maestro hesitates to produce his works for the worthy Parisians."

"And yet," put in the ballad-monger, who up to now had only opened his mouth to cram into it all the food that was within reach, "I know some men of talent who think much of the judgment of these same Parisians. I myself have

[1] The stock-pot; really meaning the chimney-corner.

something of a reputation as a musician," he added diffidently; "I owe it solely to my little songs in vaudevilles, and the great success of my quadrille music in drawing-rooms; but I propose to very soon present to the world a Mass composed for the anniversary of the death of Beethoven, and I anticipate a better understanding in Paris than elsewhere. You, monsieur, may perhaps do me the honor of hearing it?" he said, addressing Andrea.

"Thank you," replied the Count, "I am afraid that I am not endowed with an understanding necessary for the appreciation of French music. But if you were dead, monsieur, and Beethoven had written your Mass, I should have pleasure in attending the performance."

This retort effectually stopped the skirmishing of the enemy, who wanted to start Gambara off on his hobby-horse so that his gambols might furnish amusement to the new guest. Already it was repugnant to Andrea's feelings to see a madness so gentle and pathetic, if madness it were, at the mercy of this vulgar wit. It was not then with any baseness that he carried on a desultory conversation, in the course of which Giardini's nose not infrequently interposed between two replies. When Gambara gave expression to a paradoxical idea, the cook would poke his head forward, to glance pityingly on the composer, and to wink knowingly at the Count as he whispered in his ear:

"E matto!"

Presently, though the second course demanded the attention of the chef, and as he attached extreme importance to this, he was interrupted in his sapient remarks. During his absence, which was only a short one, Gambara leaned toward Andrea and said in his ear:

"Our worthy host threatens us to-day with a dish of his own concoction, which I would advise your avoiding, though his wife has had her eye upon him. The honest fellow has a mania for innovations in cookery. He has ruined himself by experimenting; the last one compelled him to flee from Rome without a passport, a thing he never talks about. After buying the good-will of a famous restaurant, he was engaged to cater for a banquet given by a lately created cardinal, whose household was in an incomplete state. Giardini thought the time had come for him to distinguish himself; he succeeded. That very evening he was accused of trying to poison the whole conclave and was forced to leave Rome, and Italy, without packing his trunk. That misfortune was the last straw, and now——" and Gambara laid his forefinger on his forehead and shook his head.

"In other respects," he added, "he is a right good fellow. My wife can inform you that we are under numerous obligations to him."

And now came in Giardini, carefully carrying a dish, which, with much elaboration, he laid upon the center of the table; then he modestly resumed his seat by Andrea, who was first helped. When the Count took just one taste of the mess, he felt that an immeasurable abyss separated him from the next mouthful. He was much embarrassed, and, being anxious to avoid annoying the cook, he kept his eye upon him and studied. Though a French restaurateur may trouble himself but little about what his guests may think of his cook-

ing, for which they must needs pay anyhow, it is otherwise with an Italian *trattore,* who is scarcely satisfied with perfunctory praise.

To gain time, Andrea paid extravagant compliments to Giardini; he leaned over to whisper in his ear, and as he did this slipped into his hand a gold-piece, begging him to go out and himself purchase some champagne, giving him the freedom to announce to the company that it was his own treat.

When, after a while, the cook reappeared, every plate was cleared, and the room re-echoed with praises for the master-cook. Under the influence of the champagne the Italian tongues were soon unlimbered, and the conversation, till now more or less subdued in the stranger's presence, leaped the barriers of suspicious reserve, and wandered wildly hither and thither over the broad fields of political and artistic theories. Andrea, who was guiltless of all intoxicants but love and poetry, soon controlled the attention of the company, and cleverly led the discussion to matters musical.

"Monsieur will, perhaps, kindly inform me," he said to the composer of dance-music, "how it is that the Napoleon of petty tunes can bemean himself to a struggle with such people as Palestrina,[1] Pergolese, and Mozart—poor creatures, who must go, bag and baggage, on the advent of this stupendous Mass for the dead?"

"You see, monsieur," replied the composer, "a musician finds it difficult to reply when his answer needs the co-operation of a hundred skilled performers. Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven, without an orchestra, would have been no great shakes."

"No great shakes!" cried the Count. "Why, man, the whole world knows that the immortal composer of *Don Giovanni* and the *Requiem* was named Mozart; but I am so unhappy as to be in ignorance by what name the inventor of fashionable country dances is known——"

"Music is a being independent of its execution," said the ex-conductor of orchestras, who, despite his deafness, had caught a few words of the conversation. "Take the C-minor symphony by Beethoven, the musical mind is borne onward into Fancy's realm on the golden wings of the theme in G-natural, repeated by the cornets in E. He sees a whole nature illuminated in turn by dazzling jets of light darkened by clouds of melancholy, inspirited by heavenly strains."

"Beethoven is outclassed by the new school," said the ballad-monger scornfully.

"Beethoven is not yet understood," said the Count. "How, then, can he be excelled?"

Here Gambara drank a large glass of champagne, accompanying his libation with a covert glance of approval.

"Beethoven," the Count went on, "has extended the limits of instrumentation, and, as yet, none have followed in his path."

Gambara assented with a slight nod.

"His works are specially remarkable for simplicity of construction and for the manner in which the theme is worked out," continued the Count. "In the works of most composers the instrumen-

[1] Much of this composer's music is still popular in the United States.

tation is vague and at random, an incoherent blending for a specious effect; they do not carry forward the progression of the harmony in the movement by any regularity and system. Whereas, Beethoven assigns to each part its tone-quality from the inchoation. The same as various regiments assist by disciplined movements in the winning of a battle, so do the various orchestral scores of a symphony by Beethoven obey the general command for the interest of the whole, and are subordinate to an admirably conceived plan.

"In this respect he may be likened to another genius. We often find in Walter Scott's noble historical romances that the personage who appears to have less to do with the action of the story than any other character is, at the proper movement, brought forward, and leads up to the climax by threads woven into the plot."

"E vero!" said Gambara, whose common sense seemed to return inversely to his sobriety.

Being anxious to test the musician still further, Andrea for the nonce abandoned his own predilections and proceeded to attack Rossini's European reputation. He disputed the position which the Italian school had captured by storm, night after night for thirty years on a hundred stages. He soon found he had enough on his hands. At his first words a strong murmur of disapproval arose; but neither interruptions nor exclamations, nor frowns, nor contemptuous looks were now able to check this determined advocate of Beethoven.

"Compare," said he, "the productions of the sublime composer with what is by common consent called the Italian school; what a paucity of ideas, what a limp in the style! Listen to those monotonous measures, those trite cadences, the endless bravura passages flung out haphazard irrespective of the dramatic situation, the ever-recurring *crescendo* brought into vogue by Rossini, and which is now become an essential in musical composition, and, last of all, those trills, vocal fireworks, all combined in a chattering, pattering, vaporous music, the sole merit of which consists in the fluency of the singer and his agility in vocalization.

"The Italian school has lost sight of art's highest mission. Instead of elevating the world, it has condescended to the crowd; its fame is won by seeking the suffrages of the multitude, and by appealing to the perverted taste of the majority. Its fame is a street-corner celebrity.

"To say all, the compositions of Rossini, in which this music is embodied, as well as of those writers who derive more or less of their style from him, seem to me to be worthy only of collecting a street crowd around a barrel-organ or keeping step to the capers of a Punch-and-Judy show. I prefer French music even to that; I can't say more. Long live German music!" he cried, "——when it is tuneful," he muttered ironically to himself.

This sally was the summing up of a long argument in which Andrea soared metaphysically with all the ease of a somnambulist on a roof. Gambara, keenly interested in such subtleties, had not missed a word of the argument. At the instant that Andrea dropped it he took it up, and the attention of the company was at once arrested; a few

who were about leaving the room returned to listen.

"You attack the Italian school most vehemently," said Gambara, who was warmed to his work by the champagne he had supped, "but that to me is a matter of indifference. Thank God, I stand outside all these frivolities of melodious frippery. Yet for a man of the world you show but little gratitude to the land from which Germany and France derived their first lessons. While the compositions of Carissimi, Cavalli, Scarlatti, Rossi, were being played through all Italy, the violinists of the French Opera enjoyed the singular privilege of being allowed to play their instruments with gloved hands. Lulli, who so much extended the realm of harmony, and who first gave the rule of discords, on arriving in France found only two men, a cook and a mason, who had voice and intelligence enough to execute his music; of the first he made a tenor, and the latter he made a bass. At that time Germans, always excepting Sebastian Bach, were ignorant of music. But, monsieur," added Gambara, in the humble tone of a man who realizes that his remarks will be received with scorn, if not ill-will, "you must, although young, have studied the higher questions of musical art for a long time, or you could not so clearly explain them."

These words caused a smile in many of the hearers, for they had not understood the fine distinction of Andrea's views. Giardini, convinced that the Count was only talking at random, nudged him warily, laughing in his sleeve at the hoax in which he thought himself an accomplice.

"There is much that strikes me as being very true in what you have said," Gambara went on; "but take care. Your argument, while it brands Italian sensualism, seems to incline somewhat to German idealism, which is a not less fatal error. If men of imagination and good taste, like yourself, desert one field only to stray into the other, if they cannot remain neutral between two extremes, we shall always be subject to the satire of the sophists who deny progress and liken human genius to—to this tablecloth, which, being too short to wholly cover Signor Giardini's table, decks one end at the expense of the other."

Giardini bounded in his chair as though he had been stung by a gad-fly, but quick reflection restored his dignity as a host; he raised his eyes to heaven and again poked the Count, who was beginning to think the cook more crazy than Gambara.

The serious and even religious manner in which the latter spoke of art interested Marcosini extremely. Seated between these two manias, one so noble, the other so vulgar, and making game of both, to the great amusement of the crowd, the Count felt as if he was continually being tossed about from the sublime to the ridiculous—the two extravaganzas of the comedy of human life. Suddenly breaking the chain of the fantastic events which had led him to this smoky den, he fancied himself the victim of some strange hallucination, and began to believe that Gambara and Giardini were two abstractions.

Presently, after a last piece of buffoonery on the part of the deaf orchestra leader, directed at Gambara, the company retired amid roars of laughter;

Giardini went off to make coffee he intended offering his guests remaining and his distinguished patron; and his wife meanwhile cleared the table. The Count was seated near the stove and between Marianna and Gambara, and in the precise position that the latter had declared to be so desirable—midway between sensualism on the one hand and idealism on the other. Gambara, who for the first time met a man who did not laugh at him to his face, soon left off generalizing and began to speak of himself, his life, his toil, and his hopes of a final musical redemption of which he believed himself to be the Messiah.

"Hearken to me," said he, "ye that have thus far not laughed me to scorn; I will tell you my life—not that I may extol a constancy which does not emanate from my own self, but for the glory of One who has placed this force in my soul. You seem to be good and reverent; if you cannot believe in me, you at least can extend me your sympathy; pity comes of man, faith is God."

Andrea, who blushed crimson, turned and withdrew his foot which had been seeking Marianna's, and fixed his gaze upon her while he listened to her husband.

"I was born at Cremona," continued Gambara, "the son of an instrument-maker; a fairly good performer of music, but a far better composer. I had thus at an early age mastered the laws of composition in its dual aspect, the spiritual and material; and, with the natural curiosity of my age, I paid attention to many things which I afterward applied in my more mature manhood.

"The French invasion drove us, my father and myself, from our home. We were ruined by the war. From the age of ten I began that wandering life to which all men are condemned who revolve in their brain reforms in art, science, or politics. Fate, or the natural instincts of their minds, which never gee with those of ordinary comprehension, leads them onward, providentially, to points where they receive instruction. Led by my passion for music I wandered through Italy from theater to theater, living on little, as men can live there. Sometimes I played the violoncello in orchestras; often I formed one of the chorus; or worked in the wings with the carpenters. Thus I studied music in its every aspect, learned the tones of the human voice and instruments, in what manner they differed from each other; I listened carefully to the scores and noted the harmonizing, always applying the rules taught by my father. Often, again, I traveled through the country mending instruments. It was a hard life in a land where the sun ever shines, where art permeates the air and money is not—at least for the artist, since Rome is no longer, save in name only, the sovereign of the Christian world.

"Sometimes I was gladly welcomed, at times driven forth because of my poverty; yet I never lost heart; I heard an inner voice fortelling fame. Music to me seemed but in its infancy. That opinion is still retained.

"All that we still have of the musical efforts anterior to the seventeenth century demonstrates to me that ancient composers knew melody only; they were ignorant of harmony and its vast resources. Music is both science and art. It is rooted in physics and mathematics,

hence a science; its inspiration makes it an art, unconsciously employing the propositions of science. It derives from the physical by the very essence of the matter on which it subsists. Sound is air in motion; air is made up of elements which undoubtedly find within us analogous constituents which respond to them, which sympathize with and augment them by the power of the intellect. Thus air must contain as many varieties of elastic molecules, capable of vibrating in as many diverse periods as there are tones in all sonorous bodies; and these particles, put in motion by the musician and received by the ear, respond to our ideas in accord with our several organizations. It is my opinion that the nature of sound is identical with that of light. Sound is light under a different form; both act by vibrations which are sentient to man, and which he transforms in his nerve-centers into ideas.

"Music is analogous to painting, making use of materials that possess the property of freeing this or that property of the birth substance in suggesting a picture. So in music the instruments perform this part, as does color in the painting. Now, as all sound produced by a reverberating body is invariably accompanied by its major third and fifth, whereby it acts on grains of sand spread upon a plain of stretched parchment and arranges them in geometrical figures—always the same in form according to the pitch—regular when the harmony is a true chord, but without definity under the influence of discords, I say that music is an art conceived in Nature's very womb."

Gambara's calm eyes were fixed upon Marcosini, who listened with rapt attention.

"It is that music is subject to both physical and mathematical laws," he went on. "The physical laws are but little understood, the mathematical laws are somewhat more fully comprehended; and, since their relationship has been more studied, it has enabled those creations of harmony to be effected which we owe to the genius of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, and Rossini, men of glorious genius, whose music is unquestionably nearer perfection than that of their predecessors, for it must be admitted that the latter's genius is incontestable. The old masters could create melody, but they had none of the resources of art and science at command—that noble alliance which blends into a grand whole the beauties of melody and the power of harmony.

"Now, if a knowledge of the mathematical laws of music gave these four musicians to us, to what height may we not attain if we can succeed in discovering the physical laws by virtue of which (please note this) we may store up in a greater or less quantity, according to the proportions required, a certain ethereal substance diffused in the air, which gives us music as it gives us light, the phenomena of vegetation and animal life! Do you grasp my meaning?

"These new laws would arm the composer with new powers; it would supply him with instruments superior to those now used, and, possibly, with a greater potency of harmony than that which dictates the realm of music at this time. If every modulation obeys a power, we must needs learn that power that we may be enabled to couple these forces

in accordance with their appropriate laws. Just now composers are working on substances unknown to them.

"Why should an instrument of metal and one of wood, say a bassoon and a cornet, have so little resemblance of tone, though they act on the same matter, in the same manner, on the constituent gases of the atmosphere? Their dissimilarities must come either from some decomposition of these gases or by the assimilation of affinities, whence they return modified by the influence of some force unknown to us. Could we only discover what those faculties are, then science and art would be immense gainers. Whatever extends science enhances art.

"Well!" he exclaimed, after a short pause, "as to these discoveries! I have traced, I have made them! Yes," said Gambara, with more and more vehemence, "up to now man has noted the effect less than the cause. If he could but penetrate cause, music would be the greatest of the arts. Is it not the one that drives deepest in the soul? In painting you see no more than the picture shows; in poetry you hear only what the poet speaks; music goes far beyond this—it forms thought, it rouses torpid memory. Take a thousand souls present at a concert; a strain speeds forth from Pasta's throat, executing so masterly the thoughts that shone in Rossini's soul as he wrote the passage; that single phrase of the master, transmitted to attentive souls, develops in them as many diverse poems. To one it shows a woman long dreamed of and desired; to another some shore anon he traversed, where rising before him are the drooping willows, its clear waters, and the hopes that danced with him beneath the leafy coverts. This woman is recalled to the throng of feelings that tortured her in an hour of jealous rage; another one sees the unsatisfied longing of her heart, which is painted by her mind in the rich hues of a dream, the ideal lover to whom she would fain abandon herself with the rapture of the woman in the Roman mosaic, who is seen embracing a chimera; yet another dreams of desires about to be gratified, she plunges in anticipation into a torrent of delight whose raging waves of feeling surge about and break upon her burning bosom. Music alone has power to make us return unto ourselves; all other arts give but limited pleasures. But I am digressing.

"Such, then, were my first ideas, vague it may be, for an inventor in his inception only catches a faint glimpse of the dawn. I kept these glorious ideas at the bottom of my knapsack; they gave me spirit to eat the dry crusts as I gayly soaked them in the waters of a spring. I worked, I composed airs, and after I had played them on some instrument, the first one to hand, I resumed my travels through Italy. At last, when I was two-and-twenty, I settled in Venice, where for the first time I enjoyed rest and gained a fair competence. There I made the acquaintance of a Venetian nobleman, who was taken with my ideas; he encouraged me in my investigations and procured me employment at the Fenice Theater. In Venice living is cheap and lodgings cost but little. I had a room in the Palazzo Capello whence the celebrated Bianca issued one night to become the Grand Duchess of Tuscany and Queen of Cyprus.

"And there I would dream that at some future time my hidden fame would issue thence to be like her, crowned.

"My evenings were spent at the theater, my days in work. But disaster came. The representation of an opera, *The Martyrs,* in which I had experimented with my music, was a failure. No one could understand my score. Place Beethoven before the Italians and they cannot gauge him. No one had the patience to await an effect to be produced by the different *motifs* given out by each instrument, all intended to at last unite in one grand harmony.

"I had founded my hopes on the success of *The Martyrs,* for we ever discount success, we disciples of the azure goddess—Hope. When a man thinks himself destined to produce great thoughts, it becomes difficult to believe that they are not achieved; the cask has chinks through which the light will shine.

"In the same palace resided my wife's family; and the hope of winning Marianna, who frequently smiled on me from her window, had greatly stimulated my efforts.

"I now fell into a state of dark melancholy, as I sounded the depths of the abyss into which I had fallen; for before me I saw naught but a life of poverty—a ceaseless struggle in which love must perish.

"Marianna acted as genius does; she bounded over every obstacle, both feet at once. I will not speak of the slender happiness which gilded the early days of my misfortunes. Dismayed by my failure, I felt that Italy was but dull of comprehension and too much under the influence of the routine chorus to be prepared to receive the innovations I meditated; so I turned my thoughts to Germany.

"As I traveled to that country, which I did by way of Hungary, I paid heed to the manifold voices of nature; I tried to reproduce those sublime harmonies by the assistance of instruments which I wholly constructed or changed for the purpose. These experiments necessitated enormous outlay, and soon exhausted our slender savings. And still this was the happiest time of our lives; I was appreciated in Germany. Never was my life so glorious as then. I know of nothing to compare with the tumultuous joys that filled me in Marianna's presence, whose beauty was then in all its celestial radiancy and power. I was happy.

"More than once during these hours of weakness I expressed my passion in the language of terrestrial harmony. I even composed some of those melodies which resemble geometrical figures, which are so much prized in the world in which we live. But so soon as I gained success insurmountable obstacles were placed in my path by rivals, envious or unappreciative.

"I had heard of France as a country which welcomed innovations; thither I resolved to go; my wife provided the means and we came to Paris.

"Before this no one had ever actually laughed in my face; but in this dreadful city I had to undergo this new form of torture, to which was added the keen anguish of miserable poverty. Compelled to sojourn in this fever-stricken quarter, for many months we have lived on Marianna's work; she does sewing for the wretched prostitutes who

make this horrid street their stamping ground. Marianna tells me that she is treated with deference and generosity, which I, for my part, ascribe to the ascendency of a so pure virtue that even vice itself must needs respect it."

"Hope on," said Andrea. "Perhaps you have reached the end of your trials. My efforts shall be united to yours, and it may be that your labors will yet be seen in their true light; permit me, in the meanwhile, as a compatriot and an artist like yourself, to offer you in advance some part, however small, of your inevitable future gains."

"All that has to do with my material life is my wife's affair alone," replied Gambara. "She it is who must decide whether without humiliation we can accept the assistance of an honorable man, as you seem to be. For myself, who have been led to make you this long-drawn confidence, I must beg your permission to retire. A melody beckons me; it starts dancingly before me; bare, quivering, like a beautiful girl entreating her lover for the clothes he has hidden. Adieu, I go to dress my mistress. My wife I leave with you."

He hastened away like a man who blames himself for losing valuable time, and Marianna, somewhat embarrassed, prepared to follow him.

Andrea dared not detain her.

Giardini, however, came to the rescue.

"But, signorina," said he, "did not you hear your husband tell you to settle some business with the Signor Count?"

Marianna resumed her seat, but without looking at Andrea, who hesitated about addressing her.

"And will not Signor Gambara's confidence," he at length said, in a voice of emotion, "also win for me that of his wife? Will *la bella* Marianna refuse to give me the history of her life?"

"My life?" answered Marianna; "my life, it is that of the ivy. If you would ask the story of my heart, you must suppose me equally devoid of pride and modesty after listening to what you have just heard."

"Of whom, then, shall I ask it?" cried the Count, whose passion was blinding his wit.

"Of yourself!" replied Marianna. "You have either understood me, or you never will. Ask yourself."

"I will, but you must listen to me. I take your hand; it is to lie in mine so long as I tell your story truthfully."

"I listen," said Marianna.

"The life of a woman begins with her first passion," said Andrea. "And my dear Marianna began to live only on the day when she first saw Paolo Gambara. Her nature needed a deep passion to afford it joy; more than all she needed some pathetic feebleness to sustain and protect. The lovely female nature with which she is endowed is perhaps less amenable to passion than maternity.

"You sigh, Marianna; have I then laid a finger on an open wound? You took upon yourself a noble part, young as you were, in protecting a noble, distraught intellect. You said to yourself: 'Paolo shall be my genius, I will be his common sense; between us we shall almost be that well-nigh devine being that men term angel; that sublime creature which enjoys and comprehends, while reason never stifles love.'

"In the first transports of youth, you heard the thousand voices of nature

which your poet longed ot reproduce. Enthusiasm seized your soul when Paolo spread before you those treasures of poetry as he vainly searched for their equivalent, striving to embody them in the sublime but limited language of his art. You admired him as an ecstatic rapture carried him high above you, for you loved to think that all this errant energy would finally fall and alight upon you as love. You did not realize the tyrannous and jealous empire which thought maintains over the minds of those who are subject to it. Gambara before he knew you was the slave of that proud, vindictive mistress with whom you have been combating for him to this day. Once, for an instant, happiness was opened before you.

"Paolo, fallen from the lofty sphere where his mind was ever soaring, was amazed to find a reality so sweet; so sweet that you may well have believed that his mania would forever slumber in your arms. But ere long music clutched her prey. The dazzling vision which carried you suddenly into the thrilling delights of mutual passion made the solitary path on which you had started look only the more arid and desolate.

"In the story just narrated by your husband, as from the striking contrast between your person and his, I can readily divine the secret anguish of your life, the painful mysteries of that ill-assorted union in which you have taken the lot of suffering upon yourself alone. Marianna, though your conduct is and has been unfailingly heroic, and though fortitude never deserts you in the performance of your cruel duties, perhaps in the silence of your solitary nights the heart which only now is beating so violently in your breast may from time to time have rebelled.

"Your husband's worthiness is your worst torture. Had he been less noble, less pure, you might have deserted him; but your virtues are supported by his. It may be that you have at times speculated which of the two heroisms will first give way.

"You pursue the real grandeur of the task while Paolo is chasing his chimera. If you had only the love of duty to sustain and guide you, perhaps triumph might seem the easier; to kill your heart and carry your life into the region of abstractions might possibly suffice you; religion would absorb the rest; you would have lived for an idea, like those saintly women who extinguish at the foot of the Cross all the instincts of their nature. But the pervading charm of Paolo's person, the elevation of his soul, his rare and affecting proofs of tenderness, constantly drag you down from that ideal world where virtue tried to keep you; they have excited forces within you which are being incessantly exhausted in contending against the phantom of love. But now the time has come in which you must no longer deceive yourself. You never suspected this. The faintest glimmer of hope kept you in the pursuit of this sweet dream.

"Year after year of disillusion has undermined your patience; an angel would long ago have lost it. To-day the phantom so long pursued is naught but a shadow without substance. Madness so closely allied to genius can never know a cure in this world. You have at last become aware of this fact, you have glanced backward on your vanished youth, lost, if not sacrificed; you bitterly

perceive the blunder of nature that gave you a father only when you sought a husband. You ask yourself whether you have not gone beyond the duties of a wife in keeping yourself faithful to a man who knows no mistress but science. Marianna, let your hand remain in mine; all that I have told you is true. You have looked around you—but now you were in Paris, not in Italy, where only men know how to love——"

"Oh! let me finish the tale," cried Marianna; "it were better fitting that I say these things myself. I will be frank; I feel that I address my truest friend. Yes, I was in Paris when all you have so lucidly explained took place within me, for nowhere had I met the love I had dreamed of from childhood up.

"My poor dress, my so poor abode, concealed me from the notice of men like yourself. The few young men I met here, whose position did not allow of their insulting me, are odious to me; these scoff at my husband as a rambling old dotard; some only court him the more easily to betray him; all aim at getting me separated from him; none of them all can understand the adoration I have vowed to that soul which is so far away from us only because it is so much nearer heaven; nor the love I feel for that friend, that brother, whose handmaid I would ever be. You alone have understood the tie that binds me to him. Tell me that your interest in my Paolo is sincere, without an object——"

"I accept your praises," interrupted Andrea, "but do not go further; do not compel me to contradict you. I love you, Marianna, as we know how to love in that glorious country where you and I were born. I love you with all my soul, with all my strength; but before I tender you this love, I intend to make myself worthy of your affection.

"I will make a last effort to give back to you the man you have loved since childhood, and whom, most probably, you will never ceaes to love. While awaiting success or defeat, accept, with no trace of shame, the modest comforts which I can give you both. To-morrow we will look out a suitable abode for him.

"Is your esteem sufficiently great to allow me to be a sharer in your guardianship?"

Marianna, astounded by such generosity, held out her hand to the Count; he took it, and departed, endeavoring to evade the civilities of Giardini and his wife.

Next day Andrea was taken up to the room in which Gambara and his wife lived. Though Marianna fully recognized the noble nature of her lover (for there are natures which can quickly read), she was too good a housewife not to show embarrassment on receiving so great a gentleman in so humble a chamber. But it was exquisitely clean. She had spent the morning in dusting her motley furniture, the handiwork of Signor Giardini, who had devoted his moments of leisure to constructing it from the woodwork of instruments which had been discarded by Gambara.

Never in his life had Andrea seen anything so amazing. To keep a sober countenance he was compelled to turn away his eyes from a bed, so grotesquely manufactured by the ingenious cook out of the case of an old harpsichord, to

look at Marianna's narrow couch, of which the single mattress was covered with a white lawn counterpane, a circumstance which surcharged his mind with sad, but some sweet thoughts.

He wished to talk of his plans and morning's work; but the enthusiastic Gambara, who believed that he had at last found a willing auditor, seized upon the Count and made him listen to an opera which he had written for the Parisians.

"In the first place, monsieur," said Gambara, "allow me to explain the subject in two words. Here in Paris people who receive a musical impression do not work it out in their own minds, as religion teaches us to develop sacred texts, by meditation and prayer. It is therefore very difficult to make them understand that there exists in nature an eternal theme, disturbed only by fluctuations independent of the Divine will, as passions are uncontrolled by the will of men.

"It became necessary that I should seek some vast framework in which to combine cause and effect, for my music aims at presenting a picture of the life of nations taken at its loftiest points of view. My opera, for I myself wrote the *libretto* (as no poet could have fittingly developed the subject), gives the life of Mahomet, a personage who unites the magic of ancient Sabæanism and the Oriental poetry of the Jewish Scriptures, resulting in one of the grandest of human epics—the dominion of the Arab.

"Mahomet, without a doubt, borrowed the idea of despotic government from the Jews, and the progressive movement which created the brilliant empire of the caliphs from the pastoral or Sabæan religions. The prophet's destiny was stamped upon him at his birth—his father was a pagan, his mother a Jewess. Ah! my dear Count, to be a great musician one must also be very learned. Without education there can be no local color; in fact, no musical ideas. The musician who only sings to sing is but an artisan, not an artist.

"This magnificent opera is a continuation of the great work I had already commenced. My first opera was called *The Martyrs;* I intend to write a third one on *Jerusalem Delivered.* You can of course discern the beauty of this triology and the manifold motives it affords. The Martyrs, Mahomet, Jerusalem! The God of the Occident, the God of the Orient, and the struggle of their religionists about a tomb. But let us not speak of my fame forever gone. Listen to the argument of my opera."

He paused.

"The first act," he went on, "shows Mahomet as a porter living in the house of Khadijah, a rich widow with whom his uncle has placed him. He is in love and ambitious. Driven from Mecca he flies to Medina, and dates his era from the time of his flight, the Hegira.

"The second act presents him as a prophet founding a religion militant. The third shows him disgusted with all things; having exhausted life, he seeks to conceal his death that he may be deemed a god, last effort of human pride.

"Now you shall judge of my method of expressing in sound a great fact which poetry can only imperfectly render in words."

Gambara seated himself at the piano

with a calm and collected air, and his wife brought the voluminous sheets of the score, which, however, he did not open.

"The whole opera," said he, "is founded on a bass as on a fruitful soil. Mahomet must therefore have a majestic bass voice, and necessarily his first wife must have a contralto one. Khadijah was quite old—twenty! Attention! Here is the overture. It begins *andante,* C-minor, triple time. Do you hear the sadness of the ambitious man whom love cannot satisfy? Through his plaints, by a modulation to E-flat, *allegro,* common time, are heard the cries of the epileptic lover, his ravings, mingled with certain warlike sounds; for the all-powerful scimitar of the caliphs begins to gleam before his eyes. The charms of the single wife give him that idea of the plurality of love which so forcibly impresses us in *Don Giovanni.* As you listen to this theme do you not already catch a glimpse of the paradise of Mahomet?

"Now we have, A-flat major, six-eight time, a *cantabile,* fit to create emotions of delight in those rebellious to all musical feeling; Khadijah comprehends Mahomet! Then Khadijah announces to the multitude the prophet's conferences with the angel Gabriel—*maestoso sostenuto,* in F-minor.

"The magistrates and priests, power and religion, feeling themselves attacked by the reformer, as Christ and Socrates attacked the effete, expiring religions and powers, turn upon Mahomet and drive him forth from Mecca—*stretto* in C-major. But now, pay heed! comes my glorious dominant— G, common time. Arabia hears her prophet, the horsemen gather—G-major, E-flat, B-flat, G-minor, still common time, the mass of men gathers like an avalanche. The false prophet practices on one tribe the deceptions he is so soon to impose upon a world—G-major.

"He promises universal dominion to the Arabs; they believe him because he is inspired. The *crescendo* begins—in the dominant still. Listen to the fanfare of the trumpets—C-major; brass instruments woven into the harmony, strongly marked, and asserting themselves as an expression of the first triumphs of victory. Medina is conquered for the prophet, the whole army marches on Mecca—burst of martial music—still in C-major. The whole power of the orchestra is worked up to a conflagration; every instrument gives voice; do you hear the torrents of harmony?

"Suddenly the *tutti* is interrupted by a graceful air—minor third. You hear the last strains of devoted love! The woman who upheld the great man dies, concealing her despair; dies, dies at the triumph of the man in whom love had become too mighty to be content with one woman; she adores him enough to sacrifice herself to the grandeur that destroys her. Soul of flame!

"But now behold! The Desert invades the world—C-major again. The orchestra takes up the score in the terrific fifth of the fundamental bass which dies away—Mahomet is satiated; he has tasted all, he has exhausted all! But he craves to die a god. Arabia adores him in prayer; we fall back upon my first sad strain to which the curtain rose—C-minor.

"Do you not discern in this music," said Gambara, ceasing to play and

turning toward the Count, "in this vivid, picturesque music, abrupt, jostling, melancholy, fantastic, but always grand, the expression of an epileptic frantic after enjoyment, unable to read or write, making his very defects of stepping-stone to his grandeur, transferring blunder and disaster into triumphs? Do you not obtain from this overture—an epitome of the opera—an idea of this seductive power over a greedy and lustful race?"

The face of the maestro, at first calm and stern, on which Andrea had been trying to divine the meaning of the ideas he was uttering with an inspired voice, though the chaotic flood of notes estopped his hearer from comprehending, grew even more animated until it took on an impassioned, fiery glow which infected Marianna and the cook. Marianna, deeply affected by the passages in which she read her own position, could not hide the agitation from Andrea.

Gambara wiped his forehead and threw his glance with such force to the ceiling that he seemed to pierce it and rise upward to the skies.

"You have seen the vestibule," said he; "now we enter the temple. The opera begins:

"Act I. Mahomet, alone on the stage, sings an air—F-natural, common time, interrupted by a chorus of camel-drivers, who surround a well at the rear of the stage — contrary time, twelve-eight. What majestic grief! It touches the heart of the most frivolous woman, piercing the soul if she has no heart. Is not this the very expression of repressed genius?"

To Andrea's very great amazement (for Marianna was accustomed to it) Gambara contracted his larynx so violently that choking sounds issued thence, something like the attempted growl of a watch-dog which has lost its voice. A light froth arose on the composer's lips and caused Andrea to shudder.

"His wife appears—A-minor. Magnificent duet! In this number I make it known that Mahomet has the will, his wife the brains. Khadijah announces that she is about undertaking a work which will bereave her of the love of her young husband. Mahomet aspires to conquer the world; his wife divines his purpose; she seconds his endeavor by persuading the people of Mecca that her husband's epileptic fits are due to his commerce with the angels. Chorus of Mahomet's first disciples, who press forward to promise him their help—C-sharp minor, *sotto voce*. Mahomet goes forth to speak with the angel Gabriel—*recitative* in F-major. His wife encourages the chorus—*aria*, accompanied by chorus; gusts of chanting voices sustain Khadijah's grand, majestic song—A-major.

"Abdallah, the father of Ayesha, the only maiden that Mahomet has found to be a virgin, whose name he thereupon changes to Abu-Bekr, the father of the virgin, comes forward with Ayesha and sings against the chorus, taking up Khadijah's in contrapuntal treatment. Omar, father of Hafsah, another virgin who is to be Mahomet's concubine, follows Abu-Bekr's example; he and his daughter join in and form a quintette. The virgin Ayesha is first soprano; Hafsah, mezzo soprano; Abu-Bekr is a bass; Omar a baritone.

"Mahomet returns inspired.

"He sings his first bravura *aria,* the beginning of the *finale*—E-major; he promises the empire of the world to those who believe in him. The prophet sees the two maidens, by a soft transition—from B-major to G-major—he turns to amorous tones. Ali, Mahomet's cousin, and Khâled, his greatest general, both tenors, now appear and announce the persecution; the magistrates, the soldiers, and rulers have banished the prophet—*recitative.*

"Mahomet now makes an invocation to the angel Gabriel in C. He declares that the angel is with him, and points out a pigeon flying above his head. The chorus of believers make reply in tones of devotion—modulating to B-major. The soldiers, magistrate, and officials arrive—*tempo di marcia,* B-major. Struggle between the two forces—*strette* in E-major. Mahomet, in a succession of diminished sevenths in a descending theme, yields to the storm and takes to flight. The savage, somber color of the *finale* is raised somewhat by the phrases of the three women, who utter predictions of Mahomet's triumph; and these *motifs* will be found further accentuated in the third act, where Mahomet is found enjoying the delights of splendor."

Tears arose in Gambara's eyes; he controlled his emotion and resumed:

"Act II. Behold religion is now established. Arabs guard the prophet's tent, who confers with God—chorus in A-minor. Mahomet appears—prayer in F. What a majestic and noble strain underlies this chant in the bass voices, in which, I believe, I have enlarged the limits of melody! It seemed necessary to express the marvels of that immense uprising which created an architecture, a poetry, a music, with its own manners, customs, and morals.

"As you listen you walk beneath the arches of the Genera-life and thread the vaulted portals of the Alhambra. The *fiorituri* of the melody paint the exquisite Moorish arabesques, the gallant and warlike religion which was presently to meet in battle the noble and valorous chivalry of Christianity. A few brass instruments now sound the first notes of triumph—by a broken *cadenza.* The Arabs, on their knees, worship the prophet—E-flat major. Khâled, Amrou, and Ali enter—*tempo dim arcia.* The armies of the Faithful have taken many towns and conquered the three Arabias. Such a sonorous *recitative!* Mahomet rewards his generals by giving them maidens.

"And here comes in," said Gambara, ruefully, "one of those wretched ballets which cut the thread of our finest musical tragedies. But Mahomet—B-minor —redeems it by his transcendent prophecy, which that poor M. de Voltaire describes in these words:

"'Arabia's day at last has come.'

"The chorus of Arabs breaks triumphant—six-eight time, *accelerando.* Now the tribes in multitude come on; horns and brass join in the orchestra. General rejoicings ensue, by degrees all the voices take part, and Mahomet declares polygamy.

"In the midst of all this triumph the woman who has done so much for Mahomet pours forth a magnificent *aria*—B-major. 'And I,' sings she, 'am I no longer loved?' 'We must part,' he responds. 'Thou art a woman, I am a prophet; slaves I may have, equals

never.' Hearken to this duet—G-sharp minor. What anguish! The woman realizes the grandeur to which she has been the means of elevating Mahomet; she loves him enough to sacrifice herself to his glory, she adores him as a god, she judges not, she murmurs not. Poor woman! his first dupe, his first victim! what a subject for the *finale*—B-major.

"Behold the somber grief standing out against the acclamations of the chorus, mingling with the tones of Mahomet as he flings his wife aside as a used-out instrument, and yet causes us to understand that he can never forget her. What fireworks of triumph, what red fire of joyous, rippling songs gush from the voices of Ayesha and Hafsa (*première* and *mezzo* soprano), further sustained by Ali and his wife, by Omar and Abu-Bekr. Weep, rejoice! Triumph and tears! Of such is life."

Marianna could not restrain her sobs; Andrea was so deeply moved that his eyes grew moist. The Neapolitan cook, shaken by the magnetic current of ideas generated by the spasmodic accents of Gambara's voice, was overcome by emotion like the rest.

The composer turned around to the group; he smiled.

"You understand me at last!" cried he.

No conqueror haled in triumph to the Capitol, amid the purple radiance of his glory and the acclamations of a nation, even wore such an expression when the crown was placed upon his head as Gambara did at this time. His face had the halo of a martyred saint. None undeceived him. A dreadful smile flickered on Marianna's lips. The Count was appalled by the artless, blind insanity.

"Act III.," said the rapt musician, again seating himself at the piano:

"Solo, *andantino*, Mahomet unhappy though in his seraglio surrounded by women. Quartette of houris—A-major. What pomp of harmony, what trills as those of a happy nightingale! It modulates into F-sharp minor. The theme is given on the dominant (E) and is then repeated in A-major. Here all delights are grouped visibly to the senses and produce a grand contrast to the somber *finale* of the first act.

"After the dances Mahomet arises and sings a grand *bravura*—F-minor. He regrets the singleness and devotion of his first wife, but acknowledges himself as wedded to polygamy. Never did musician have so grand a subject. The orchestra and women's chorus express the joys of the houri; meanwhile Mahomet reverts to the sad strain of the beginning.

"Where is Beethoven?" cried Gambara; "where, then, is that soul who only could understand the majestic overturning of my opera upon itself. See how completely all depends upon the bass; thus did Beethoven construct his symphony in C.

"But his heroic movement is purely instrumental, while mine is sustained by a sextette of glorious human voices, and a chorus of believers who are on guard at the gate of the sacred dwelling. I have here collected all the treasures of melody and harmony, vocal and orchestral. Listen to the utterance of all human life, rich or poor: BATTLE, TRIUMPH, SATIETY.

"Ali enters; everywhere the Koran is triumphant—duet, D-minor. Mahomet places himself in the hands of his two

fathers-in-law; he is weary of all; he will abdicate and die in secret after he has consolidated his religion. Magnificent sextette—B-flat major! He bids all farewell—solo in F-natural. His two fathers-in-law, appointed his vicars or caliphs, summon the people. A grand triumphal march. Prayer of the Arabs kneeling before the sacred dwelling, the Kasba, whence a pigeon takes its flight—same key. This prayer, sung by sixty voices and led by women—B-flat—crowns my stupendous work, which so well expresses the life of men and nations. Here you have heard every emotion, human or divine."

Andrea was ovecrome with sheer amazement. He was much affected by this good man's mania, he colored, and stole a glance at Mariana; while she became pallid and turned her eyes downward, silently weeping. Had he not been shocked by the irony which the man showed as he presented the feelings of Mahomet's wife and yet not perceiving the same emotions in Marianna, the madness of the husband was eclipsed by the craziness of the composer. There was not the least resemblance to musical or poetical ideas in the loud blathering which oppressed his ears. All the principles of harmony, the first rules of composition, were quite ignored in this formless creation. Instead of a theme scientifically worked out such as had been described by Gambara, his fingers had brought out a succession of fifths, sevenths, octaves, major thirds, progressions of fourths, minus the sixths in the bass—a jumble of discordant sound, randomly made, as though intended to destroy the ear of the least sensitive of listeners. It is impossible to attempt a description of this grotesque execution; new words must needs be coined to portray this impossible music.

During its execution he had closed his eyes in ecstasy; had smiled upon his piano; had frowned at it; put out his tongue after the manner of an inspired performer. He had been, in fact, intoxicated by the poetry of the thoughts that peopled his brain—he had vainly endeavored the utterance of them. The strange discords has evidently been to him celestial harmonies. Beyond any doubt the vision of his inspired blue eyes in rapt enjoyment of another world; the rosy glow of his cheeks; above all, the heavenly serenity stamped upon his lofty features, would have led any deaf man to believe that he was present at the improvisation of some maestro. The illusion would have been the more perfect because the mechanical execution of this crazy music required immense skill in fingering. Gambara must have worked at it for years.

His hands not alone employed; his feet were constant in the pedaling; perspiration streamed down his face as he labored to fully emphasize a *crescendo* by all the feeble means which a decrepit piano afforded. He stamped, snorted, puffed, and shouted; his fingers darted hither and thither like the forked fangs of a snake; finally, as the piano uttered its last growl, he flung himself backward and let his head rest on the back of the chair.

"*Per Bacco!* I am stunned, dizzy," cried Andrea, escaping from the chamber. "A child dancing on the keyboard would make better music."

"Certainly," said Giardini, "mere

chance could not more successfully avoid hitting two notes in concord than that devil of a fellow has done during the hour now gone."

"How comes it that the regular features of Marianna's beauty remain?" muttered the Count to himself. "Such an incessant hearing of so hideous melody must change anything. She will grow ugly."

"Signor Count, she must be saved from that," cried Giardini.

"Yes," said Andrea, "I have been thinking of that. But to be sure that my plans are not built upon the sands, I must test my thoughts by yet another experiment. To-morrow I will return and examine the instruments he has invented; after dinner we will have a little supper (*medianoche*). I provide the wine and a few fancy dishes."

The cook bowed low.

The next day was spent by the Count in arranging the suite of rooms in which he intended domiciling the poor household.

He returned in the evening to the Rue Froidmanteau and found the wine and so forth set out by Marianna and Giardini, displaying some little taste. Gambara with much pride showed him some little drums, on which lay grains of gun-powder, by which means he made observations on the pitch and temperament of the sounds emitted by his instruments.

"Do you see," said he, "by what simple means I am able to demonstrate a great proposition? Acoustics by this means reveal actions analogous to sound on every object which that sound affects. All harmonies start from a common center and always retain an intimate relation to each other; rather, harmony, like light, is decomposed by our art as a ray is by a prism."

Here Gambara proceeded to show Andrea the instruments constructed according to his principles, and he explained the changes he had made in their shape and material. Finally he announced, with gravity, that, to properly conclude this preliminary evening, which had thus far only gratified the curiosity of the eye, he would allow all then present to hear an instrument which was capable of taking the place of an entire orchestra; he called this the *panharmonicon*.

"If it is the arrangement in that case which causes a grumbling of all the neighbors," said Giardini, "when you are working on it, you won't do much playing thereon, for the police will interfere. Bear that in mind."

"If that unhappy idiot remains in the room," whispered Gambara in Andrea's ear, "it will be impossible that I should play."

The Count made a pretext to get rid of the cook by promising him a present if he would stay downstairs and prevent the police and neighbors from interfering. Giardini, who had not stinted his own allowance of wine while pouring out for the others, willingly complied.

The composer, while not intoxicated, was in that elevated condition when every function of the brain is overexcited; when the opaque walls become transparent, the garret roofless, and the soul takes flight into the world of spirits.

Marianna, not without difficulty, uncovered an instrument about the size

of a grand piano; but with an upper manual and a great double case, not altogether unlike the boxing of an organ. This curious machine was also provided with stops for various instruments, and the bent elbows of a number of tubes or pipes.

"Will you play for me the prayer which you say is so fine, the *finale* of your opera?" asked the Count.

To Andrea's great astonishment and Marianna's surprise, Gambara commenced with a few chords in perfect harmony that proclaimed him a master; their astonishment was succeeded by admiration and in turn by complete rapture; they entirely lost sight of the place and performer. The effects of a full orchestra would have been less fine than the reedy tone of the wind instruments, which swelled like an organ and formed a marvelous blend with the string harmonies. But the unfinished state of this machine prevented the full development of the composer's ideas, which seemed the greater for the sense of incompleteness. It may be remarked that certain perfections in works of art seem rather to detract from than improve the unfinished sketch; for one may then add the deficiency by his own thoughts.

The purest and sweetest music that Andrea had ever heard rose from under the impact of Gambara's fingers like incense from an altar. The composer's voice became again youthful; so far from marring the fine melody, it expounded, supported, and directed it; as the quavering voice of a reader like Andrieux gives scope to the meaning of some great scene by Corneille or Racine by lending it a personal and sympathetic emotion.

This angelic music revealed the treasures that lay hidden in the grand opera which could never be understood so long as this man persisted in the endeavor to explain it in his normal state of dementia.

Marianna and Andrea, equally divided between delight of the music and surprise at the strange instrument with its hundred-voice stops, in which a stranger might think a choir of young girls was hidden, so closely did some of the tones resemble the human voice, dared not exchange ideas either by word or look. Marianna's countenance was radiant with a glow of hope, which revivified the beauty of her youth. This new birth of beauty, in connection with the luminosity of her husband's genius, cast a shadowy tinge of sadness over the pleasure that this mysterious hour had given the Count.

"You are our good spirit!" Marianna whispered to him. "I am tempted to think that you inspire him, for I, who am never away from his side, have never yet heard anything like this."

"Khadijah's farewell," said Gambara; who now sang the *cavatina* which he had the previous evening described as being sublime, and which now brought tears to the eyes of the lovers, so perfectly did it express the noblest sentiments of devoted love.

"Who can have inspired you with such music?" cried the Count.

"The spirit," answered Gambara. "When he appears, flame is all around me. I see the melodies face to face; fresh, beautiful, in floral coloring. They sparkle, they echo—I listen. But an

infinity of time is necessary to reproduce them."

"Play on," said Marianna.

Gambara, who seemed not to feel fatigue, played without effort or untowardness. He executed the overture with such facility and skill, he showed such new and undiscovered musical effects, that the Count was dazzled by what he heard; he began to believe in some magic like that controlled by Liszt and Paganini—a genius of execution which can change all musical conditions and create of it a poetry transcendent of all conditions of music.

"Well, excellenza, and can you cure him?" asked Giardini, when at length Andrea went down.

"I shall soon be able to say," replied the Count. "The man's intellect has two windows: one is turned toward the earth and is closed; the other looks in upon heaven. The first is music, the second poetry. Until now he would stand stubbornly before the closed window; we must get him to the other. It was you, Giardini, that first put me on the track of this truth, by letting me know that his mind was clearer after a few glasses of wine."

"Yes," cried the cook, "and I can guess your scheme, excellenza."

"If it is not too late to make poetry ring in his ears to the sound of a glorious harmony, we must put him into a condition to hear and judge of it. Now it seems to me that only intoxication can bring this about. Will you assist me in this? You won't be any the worse for it, eh?"

"What is your excellency getting at?"

Andrea made no answer, but went away laughing at the perspicacity of the crazy mind of the Neapolitan.

On the following day Marcosini came to fetch away Marianna and show her the lodging he had secured. She had used the morning in fixing up a simple but decent dress, into which she had put the whole of her little savings. The change would have been the disillusion of a mere dangler; but the fancy of the Count had now become a settled passion.

Marianna, stripped of her picturesque poverty, was transformed outwardly into a mere bourgeoise, and gave Andrea visions of a wedded life; he gave her his hand in assisting her into the hackney-coach, and acquainted her with his ideas. She smiled and approved; she was happy at finding her admirer more lofty, more generous, more disinterested than she had dared to hope. He soon reached the new dwelling, where Andrea had endeavored to keep himself ever in her thoughts by adding a few of those little elegancies which beguile the most virtuous of women.

"I will never mention my love to you until we despair of Paolo's sanity," he said to her, as they returned to the Rue Froidmanteau. "You shall be witness to the sincerity of my efforts. If these prove successful, I may be unable to keep up my part as only your friend. If this happens I shall flee you, Marianna. I have firmness enough, I think, to work for your happiness, though I may not have enough to look upon it."

"Do not say such things," said Marianna, with difficulty keeping back her tears. "Has not generosity its dangers, also? But are you going so soon?"

"Yes," said Andrea, "seek your happiness without my drawback."

If Giardini is to be believed, the excellent change of air and living was favorable to both husband and wife. Every evening after his wine, Gambara appeared less absent-minded, talked more, and was more sedate; he even proposed to read the papers. Andrea quaked in his shoes at each manifestation of his success; but, though his distress made him aware of the strength of his passion, this did not cause him to relax his virtuous resolution. He now came every evening to learn the progress of this singular cure. On one occasion the state of the patient gave him satisfaction, but his pleasure was dazed by Marianna's beauty, for her life being rendered less onerous had restored her brilliant loveliness.

He joined each evening in the conversations, grave or gay, in which he argued coolly and dispassionately against Gambara's singular theories. He used the remarkable lucidity of the latter's mind, on every point that did not touch upon his malady, to make him clearly perceive and acknowledge principles in other branches of art and which he afterward demonstrated were equally applicable to music.

All went well so long as the composer's brain was under the influence of the fumes of wine; but just as soon as he became perfectly sober his reason was dethroned—he was again the maniac. And yet, in the main, Paolo was more easily aroused by impressions from the outer world; his mind even began to employ itself on a greater diversity of subjects.

Andrea, who took all an artist's interest in his semi-medical treatment, thought at length that it was about time to try a master-stroke. He resolved to give a dinner at his own house, to which he intended inviting Giardini for the purpose, as he told himself, of not separating the sublime and the ridiculous. He selected the day that *Robert le Diable,* an opera he had already heard in rehearsal, was for the first time given in public.

After the second course Gambara was already half-seas over, he was laughing at himself with a good grace, while Giardini was admitting that his own culinary innovations were of the Devil.

Andrea had neglected no means to bring about this twofold miracle. Flagons of Orvieto and Montefiascone, expensive wines which are easily spoiled if carelessly carried; liqueurs of Lachrymæ Christi, and Giro, and other heady liqueurs of *la cara patria* or the beloved country, soon caused the double intoxication, in these excitable minds, of grape and reminiscence. At dessert the musician and the cook mutually abjured every heresy; one hummed a *cavatina* from Rossini, the other piled confectionery on his plate and washed them down with maraschino from Zara, to the honor of the *cuisine Française.*

The Count took advantage of Gambara's happy frame of mind to carry him off to the opera, whither he allowed himself to be led like a lamb.

With the first notes of the introduction Gambara's inebriety vanished, and gave place for the feverish excitement which at times brought his judgment and imagination into harmony; the habitual discord of which was the undoubted source of his insanity. The dominant idea of that great musical drama appeared to him in all its radiant sim-

plicity, like a flash of lightning breaking through the clouds of darkness in which he lived. To his unsealed eyes the music seemed to sweep the immense horizons of a world in which he found himself for the first time, though he recognized it as what he had seen in his dreams.

He fancied himself transported to those slopes of his own dear native country where *la bella Italia* commences, and which Napoleon so appropriately termed the "glacis of the Alps." His memory took him back to the day when his young, vigorous brain was not yet troubled by the fervid imagination; he listened in reverent awe, unwilling to miss a word. The Count respected the travail of his soul. Till after twelve o'clock he sat so motionless that the opera-house audience might have taken him for a drunken man—which he was. On his way home the Count began to attack Meyerbeer's masterpiece, trying to arouse Gambara, who was now plunged in the half-torpid state of drunkenness.

"What is there in that incoherent score that it makes a somnambulist of you?" said Andrea, when they arrived at his house. "The story of *Robert le Diable* is not altogether without interest, I'll admit. Holtei has very happily worked out with much skill a well-written drama, full of strong and moving situations, but the French librettists have managed to make it the most absurd bundle of nonsense. No libretto of even Vesari or Schikaneder has ever equaled in absurdity the words of *Robert le Diable;* it becomes a dramatic nightmare, which oppresses the hearer without arousing any deep emotion.

"Meyerbeer's devil plays too prominent a part. Bertram and Alice represent the contest between right and wrong, the good and evil spirit. That antagonism offers a splendid opportunity to the composer. The sweetest melodies, placed side by side with harsh and crude airs, is the natural consequence of the libretto; but, unfortunately, in the score of the German composer the devils sing better than the saints.

"The heavenly inspirations give the lie to their origin; when the composer leaves the infernal lay for a moment, he returns as speedily as may be, worn out with the effort of trying to be rid of them. Melody, the golden thread that should never be broken in so vast a scheme, is often strained to the vanishing point in Meyerbeer's work. Sentiment is absolutely lacking; the heart has no part in it; we find few of those delightful inventions, those artless themes which touch our sympathies and leave a tender impression on the soul.

"Harmony reigns supreme, instead of being the ground-work from whence should issue the melodious groups of the musical picture. Those discordant notes, far from moving the hearer, only excite in him a sentiment similar to the one he would experience in seeing a tight-rope walker hanging, as it were, midway between life and death. The soothing *arias* never come at the right moment to quiet this nervous agitation. One might well believe that the composer had no other object in view than to produce a bizarre effect, not troubling himself about musical truth or unity; or about the capability of the human voice, which is overwhelmed in this flood of instrumental hurly-burly."

"Hush, my friend!" said Gambara, "I

am still under the influence of that glorious chorus of hell, made still more terrible by those long trumpets—a new instrumentation. The broken *cadenzas* which add such vigor to Robert's scene, the *cavatina* in the fourth act, the *finale* to the first, still hold me in the clutch of some superhuman power. No, even Gluck's compositions never produced so powerful an effect; I am amazed at such skill."

"Signor Maestro," said Andrea, smiling, "permit me to contradict you. Before Gluck wrote he pondered long; he calculated the chances and adopted plans which might afterward be modified under his inspirations in their details, but he never allowed himself to stray from the marked-out path. Therein lies his power of emphasis; that elocution of music which has life and truth in every beat.

"I agree with you that the science of Meyerbeer's opera is very great; but science becomes a defect when isolated from inspiration; I think I can see in that opera the painful work of a cultivated craftsman, who in his music has interlarded gems from many forgotten sources, or from damned operas; these he has extended, remodeled, or concentrated. But he has fallen into the usual error of the plagiarist, an abuse of good things. This clever gleaner in the harvest-fields of music is prodigal in discords, which, when too frequently introduced, end by annoying the ear; it becomes habituated to startling effects, such as a composer should be chary in giving, so that he may obtain the full benefit when the situation demands it.

"This inharmonic phrasing is repeated to satiety, and the abuse of the plagal cadence[1] detracts from the religious solemnity of the work.

"Of course I am well aware that every composer has his particular methods to which he will return again and again in spite of himself; but he should watch and guard himself against that blunder. A picture that had none but blues and reds in it would be unfaithful to nature, beside fatiguing to the eyes. Thus the constantly recurring rhythm of the score of *Robert le Diable* gives monotony to the whole. As to the effect of the long trumpets, of which you speak, it has long been known in Germany, and what Meyerbeer gives us for novelty was constantly utilized by Mozart, who makes his chorus of devils in *Don Giovanni* sing in that manner."

By these contradictions and renewed libations Andrea strove to bring Gambara back to his proper musical senses; he endeavored to show him that his so-called mission to the world was not to regenerate an art beyond his powers, but to seek expression for his ideas under another form, by poetry, in fact.

"You, my dear Count, do not understand the least thing about that stupendous musical drama," said Gambara, airily.

He stood in front of Andrea's piano, struck the keys, listened to the tone, then seated himself, meditating for a few moments as if to collect his ideas.

"In the first place you must know," said he, "that a trained ear like mine perceived at once that labor of setting of which you speak. Yes, this music has been lovingly selected from the store

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[1]The chord of the sub-dominant followed by that of the dominant.—TRANS.

of a rich and fertile imagination into which science has squeezed ideas which are to bring out the very essence of music.

"I will illustrate this."

He rose to move the wax-candles into the adjoining room, and, before returning to his seat, he drank a large glass of Giro, a wine of Sardinia, as full of fire as any old Tokay has ever been.

"It is this," said Gambara, "this music was not written for skeptics nor for those who know not love. If you have never in your life experienced the vehement assaults of an evil spirit, who ever moves the object at which you are about to take aim, who brings to a painful end your liveliest hopes—in one word, if you have never felt the Devil's tail whisking about the world—the opera of *Robert le Diable* must be to you what the Apocalypse is to those who think that all ends when they do. But if, persecuted and wretched, you understand that spirit of evil, that so great ape which hourly is engaged in destroying the work of God; if you imagine him as not having loved, but of ravishing an almost divine woman, and gaining from that deed the joys of paternity; as so loving his son that he would rather have him miserable to all eternity that he might be with him, than to think of his being in eternal happiness with God; if, again, you can imagine the soul of the mother hovering around her son to draw him away from the atrocious temptations offered by his father, you, even then, will have but a faint idea of that stupendous poem, in which little is wanting for it to become the rival of Mozart's *Don Giovanni.*

"*Don Giovanni* is, I admit, the superior by the perfection of its form. *Robert le Diable* represents ideas; *Don Giovanni* arouses sensations. *Don Giovanni* is still the only musical work in which harmony and melody are exactly balanced. In this lies its superiority to *Robert le Diable,* for *Robert* is the richer work.

"But to what good are these comparisons, since both works are beautiful in their own way? To me, subject as I have been to the oft-repeated assaults of the demon, *Robert* speaks more powerfully than to you; I find it at once vast and concentrated.

"Thanks to you, I have been transported to the land of dreams, where our senses expand, where the universe unfolds in gigantic scale in comparison with man."

He was silent for a moment.

"I am still quivering," continued the unlucky artist, "at the sound of those four measures of the cymbals, which shook my very being when they open that short, abrupt introduction where the trombone solo, the flutes, oboes, and the clarionet cast a fantastic color over the soul. The *andante* in C-minor is a foretaste of the invocation of spirits in the abbey; it gives grandeur to the scene by its announcement of a purely spiritual struggle. I shuddered!"

Gambara struck the keys with a firm hand and developed Meyerbeer's theme in a masterly *fantasia,* a kind of explosion after the manner of Liszt. The instrument was no longer a piano, it was an orchestra they heard—the Genius of music rose before them.

"That is Mozart," he cried. "Hear how that German handles his chords; see through what intricate modulations

he raises the image of terror to come to the dominant of C. I can hear all hell there!

"The curtain rises.

"What do I see? The only spectacle to which we can give the epithet infernal; an orgy of Knights in Sicily. The chorus in F contains every human passion let loose in that bacchanalian *allegro*. Every thread by which the Devil holds us is pulled. That is the kind of joy that comes over men when they dance on the verge of a precipice; they whirl themselves into vertigo. What 'go' in that chorus!

"From that chorus, the reality of life, an artless bourgeois of every-day existence stands out—G-minor—in the song by Raimbaut, full as it is of simplicity. That worthy man, who is the representative of the fresh verdure of plenteous Normandy, refreshes my soul as he recalls it to Robert's mind in the midst of his drunkenness. The sweetness of that beloved land shines like a thread of gold in the dark texture of the scene.

"Now comes the marvelous ballad in C-major, accompanied by the chorus in C-minor, so expressive of the theme. Then the outburst *'Je suis Robert'*—I am Robert. The rage of the prince offended by his vassal is no longer a natural fury; but presently it calms down, for memories of childhood arise, with those of Alice, in that gracefully pretty *allegro*—A-major.

"Do you not hear the cries of the persecuted innocent as it enters this infernal drama? 'No, no!'" sang Gambara, and making the piano echo him. "His native land and its sweet memories bloom anew in Robert's heart; his mother's shade now arises, bringing in its train soothing religious thoughts. Religion it is that inspires that beautiful song in E-major, with its miraculous progressions in harmony and melody, in the words:

" 'Car dans les cieux, comme sur la terre,
Sa mère va prier pour lui.'
(For in the skies as on the earth
For him his mother prayeth.)

The struggle begins between the mysterious powers and the only human being who has the fire of hell in his veins to resist them. To make this quite clear, as Bertram comes on, the great musician gives the orchestra a *ritornello* reminiscent of Raimbaut's ballad. What art! What cohesion of every part! What strength of construction!

"The Devil is beneath all; he hides, he squirms. With the terror of Alice, who recognizes the devil of the image of St. Michael in her own Norman village, the conflict of the powers antagonistic begins. The musical theme develops —in what varied phrases! The antithesis so necessary in every opera is emphatically shown in a grand *recitative*, such as Gluck might have composed, between Bertram and Robert:

" 'Tu ne sauras jamais à quel excès je t'aime.'
(Never wilt thou understand to what excess I love thee.)

In that diabolical C-minor, Bertram, in his terrible bass, which countermines and destroys every effort of the vehement, passionate man, is, to me, terribly appalling.

"Must the crime become possessed of of the criminal? Will the executioner

clutch his prey? Must misfortune swallow up the genius of the artist? Will the disease kill the patient? Can the guardian angel save the Christian?

"Now the *finale,* the gambling scene, in which he torments his son by rousing him to terrible emotions. Robert, despoiled, angry, destroying everything around him, eager for killing, breathing blood, fire, and sword, is his own son; the father sees the likeness. What horrid glee we note in Bertram's words, *'Je ris de tes coups!'* or, 'I laugh at thy blows!' How the Venetian *barcarole* tinges this *finale!* Through what bold transitions that infamous parent is brought on the stage again to drag Robert to once more throw the dice!

"This first act is overpowering to those who follow out such themes in the profundity of their thought and gives them the breadth of meaning the composer intends to convey.

"Love alone could be in contrast with that grand symphony of song, in which you cannot detect any monotony nor twice the employment of the same means. It is one, it is many; it is characteristic of all that is grand and natural. I breathe freer; I reach the higher sphere of a chivalrous court; I hear Isabella in charming phrase, fresh, but always melancholy; and the female chorus in two divisions, echoing each other, with a suggestion, it seems, of the Moorish influence on Spain.

"Here the terrifying music is softened to a gentler tone, like a storm dying away, till it comes to this dainty flowery duet, so sweetly modulated and entirely unlike the preceding music. After the turmoil of a camp of martial heroes and free-lances comes a fair picture of love. Poet! I thank thee! My heart could not have borne more.

"If I could not here and there have plucked the daisies of a French light opera, if I had listened to the sweet gayety of a woman able alike to love and charm, I could not have endured that terrible, deep note with which Bertram reappears, as he says to his son: *'Si je le permets!'* (If I permit it); when Robert has promised, in his hearing, the princess he adores, that he will conquer with the arms she gives him.

"To the hope of the gambler reforming through love, the love of the exquisite Sicilian—do you not note that falcon eye?—to the hope of the man hell answers in that awful cry: *'A toi, Robert de Normandie!'*

"Does not the somber horror of those long-held, splendid notes excite your admiration in that: *'Dans la forêt prochaine'?* All the fascination of *Jerusalem Delivered* is to be found here, just as chivalry appears in that chorus with the Spanish movement; and in the *tempo di marcia.* What originality in that *allegro;* in the modulation of the four cymbals in C-D, C-G! What grace in the call to the lists! The movement of the whole heroic life of the period is there; the soul unites with it; I read in it a romance, a poem of chivalry.

"The exposition now ends; the resources of the art of music appear to have been exhausted; and yet it was a homogeneous whole. You have had human life set before you in its one, its only real aspect. 'Shall I be happy or unhappy?' is the query of the philosopher. 'Shall I be saved or damned?' is that of the Christian."

Here Gambara struck the last chords

of the chorus which he brought forth in a lingering, melancholy way; he then rose and poured out and drank another large glass of Giro. This semi-African vintage again lit up the fires of his countenance, which had been somewhat paled by the passionate and wonderful sketch of Meyerbeer's opera that he had made.

"That nothing may be lacking to this composition," he resumed, "the great artist has given us the only *buffo* duet permissible for a devil to sing; that in which the unhappy troubadour is tempted. He puts a horror and a jest side by side, a jest that literally swallows up the only realism he had allowed himself in the weird opera—the pure, calm love of Alice and Raimbaut; their life is to be troubled by anticipatory evils. Only great souls can feel the nobility that animates these *buffo* airs.

"They have neither the gaudiness of our Italian music nor the vulgarity of our Parisian street favorites; they possess rather the divinity of Olympus. The bitter laugh of a divine being mocks the surprise of the Don-Juanized troubadour. Only for this diginty the return to the general tone of the opera would be too suddenly achieved, full as it is of terrible fury of diminished sevenths, and resolving into that infernal waltz, which at last brings us face to face with the howling demons.

"How vigorously Bertram's couplet detaches itself—B-minor—from the devils' chorus, in which is depicted the knowledge of paternity mingled in awful despair with demoniac voices! What an exquisite transition is the arrival of Alice, *ritornello* in B-flat. I still hear those voices of the angels in their heavenly freshness; it is the warble of the nightingale after the tempest.

"Thus is the leading idea of the whole worked out in detail; for what could better be done than the contrast with the tumult of demons in their den and the wonderful *aria* by Alice?

"The golden thread of the melody glides through the entire length of the grand harmony like a hope of heaven; it is embroidered on it with marvelous skill. She sings:

"'Quand j'ai quitté la Normandie.'
(When I forsook my Normandie.)

"Genius can never lose hold on the science that guides it. Here Alice's song in B-flat is taken up to F-sharp, the dominant of the chorus of devils. Do you hear the *tremolo* of the orchestra? Robert is being bidden to the rout of devils.

"Here Bertram re-enters, and this is the culminating point of musical interest, a *recitative,* only comparable to the finest compositions of the greatest masters; comes the struggle in E-flat between the two combatants, Heaven and Hell—one in *'Oui, tu me connais!'* (Yes, thou knowest me!)—on a diminished seventh; the other in that sublime F, *'Le ciel est avec moi!'*—(Heaven is with me!) Hell and the Crucifix are face to face.

"Then we have Bertram's threats to Alice, the most awful pathos ever written; the Genius of Evil complacently making himself known, and, as usual, tempting through self-interest. The arrival of Robert gives us the magnificent trio, unaccompanied, in A-flat; this opens the struggle between the two rival forces

for the possession of the man. Note how clearly this is effected," exclaimed Gambara, who epitomized the scene with such passion of execution as startled Andrea.

"All this avalanche of music, from the crash of the cymbals in common time, has rolled onwards to this contest of the three voices. The spell of Evil triumphs! Alice flees. You hear the duet between Bertram and Robert—in D. The Devil fixes his talons in Robert's heart; he renders it for his own; he descants on every feeling—honor, hope, eternal pleasure, all are in turn displayed before him; he carries him, as he did Jesus, to the pinnacle of the temple, he shows him all the treasures of the earth, that jewel-case of Sin. Finally he piques his courage, he stings him, and the noble instinct of the man is expressed in that cry:

" 'Des chevaliers de ma patrie
L'honneur toujours fut le soutien.'
(To the knights of my native land,
Their mainstay was honor ever.)

To crown the whole opera comes in the same theme which so fatally prognosticated the work at its opening, that grand invocation to the dead:

" 'Nonnes qui reposez sous cette froide pierre,
M'entendez-vous?'
(Nuns who sleep beneath that cold, cold stone,
Hear ye me?)

Carried most gloriously through the career of the music, it ends equally gloriously in the *allegro vivace* of the bacchanal—D-minor. Here is the triumph of hell! Roll on, harmony! Swathe us in thy manifold cloak! Roll on, bewitching!

"The powers of the infernal have seized their prey. They hold him while they dance around him. The noble genius born to vanquish, born to reign, is lost! Devils rejoice, genius is stifled by poverty, passion wrecks the knight."

Here Gambara improvised a *fantasia* himself, cleverly varying the *bacchanale*, and accompanying the piano in a soft tone of voice, as if to give utterance to the sufferings he had known.

"Do you hear the celestial plaints of neglected love?" said he. "Isabella calls Robert from the midst of that grand chorus of knights wending their way to the tournament, where the *motifs* of the second act reappear to emphasize the fact that the events of the third act happen in supernatural spheres. Here is real life again. The chorus fades away as the enchantments of hell approach, which are brought by Robert with his talisman. Now develop the deviltries of the third act. First the viola duet, where the rhythm plainly depicts the brutal desires of a man who is omnipotent, while the princess, in plaintive moans, endeavors to recall her lover to reason.

"Here the musician has placed himself in a position that is very difficult to be brought out; but he surmounts it by the sweetest gem in the whole work. What exquisite melody in the *cavatina 'Grâce pour toi!'* (Mercy for thee!) That one number would suffice to make any opera famous; for every woman feels that she is contending against a knight. Never yet was music so passionate, so dramatic.

"The whole world now rises against the reprobate. Some may object that

the *finale* resembles too much that of *Don Diovanni;* but there is this immense difference: a noble faith inspires Isabella, a perfect love that will rescue Robert, who scornfully rejects the talisman of hell confided to him, while, on the other hand, Don Giovanni persists in his unbelief. Beside all, this accusation has been made against every composer who has written a *finale* since the time of Mozart. The *finale* to *Don Giovanni* is one of those classic forms that have been invented once for all time.

"At last we hear Religion, which arises omnipotent, in a voice that rules the universe, that calls all sorrow to come and be consoled, all repentances, that they may have peace.

"The whole house is stirred by the chorus:

> "'Malheureux ou coupables,
> Hâtez-vous d'accourir!'
> (Now wretched, guilty men,
> Haste to approach!)

Hitherto, in the fearful tumult of unchained passions, the Holy Voice had not been heard; but at this critical moment it booms out like thunder; the Catholic Church divine rises glorious in light. And I am astonished to here find at the close of such a lavish use of harmonic treasures a new vein of gold in that grand masterpiece of chorus: *'Gloire à la Providence!'* written in Handel's style.

"Robert, distracted, rushes on the stage with his heart-rending cry: *'Si je pouvais prier!'* (Could I but pray!) But, constrained by the edict of hell, Bertram pursues his son and makes a final effort. Alice calls up the vision of the Mother. Now you hear the glorious trio to which the whole opera has gradually advanced, the triumph of soul over matter, the victory of the spirit of Good over the spirit of Evil. The strains of faith prevail over the chorus of hell, joy reappears in majesty. Here the music weakens. I but see a cathedral instead of hearing a concert of angels in bliss; a divine prayer of souls delivered, consecrating the union of Robert and Alice. We ought not to be left under the spells of hell, we should be able to leave the scene with a heart of hope.

"Myself a Catholic and a musician, I needed for my soul another prayer like the one from *Moses in Egypt.* Also would I fain have seen Germany contending with Italy—what Meyerbeer could do to rival Rossini.

"However, the writer may say, in justification of this defect, that, after five hours of such solid, substantial music, a Parisian prefers a bon-bon to a musical masterpiece. You heard the applause that followed the performance; it will run five hundred nights. If the French really understand that music——"

"It is because they have ideas," said the Count.

"No, it is because it powerfully sets forth in definite shape an image of that struggle in which so many souls are worsted; and because all individual existences are connected with it by memory, as it were. Therefore is it that I, unhappy one, grieve that at the end I do not hear the sound of those celestial voices I have so often heard in dreams."

Here Gambara fell into a musical ecstasy; he improvised the most lovely, melodious, and harmonious *cavatina* that Andrea should ever hear; a song divinely sung, on a theme as graceful and full

of charm as that of *O filii et filiæ;* but with added beauties such as none but musical genius of the highest order could have rendered.

The Count was lost in rapt admiration; the clouds were breaking; the celestial blue shone out; now angelic forms appeared and raised the veil that hid the sanctuary; the light of heaven descended.

Silence reigned again.

The Count, surprised at the music suddenly ceasing, looked up at Gambara, who, with fixed, staring eyes and rigid form, stammered the word: "God!"

The Count quietly awaited the moment when the composer returned from celestial glory, whither the prismatic wings of inspiration had borne him, resolving to illuminate his mind with the very truths that he himself should bring down.

"Well," said he, pouring out another bumper of wine and clinking glasses with him, "this German has written, as you say, a sublime opera without troubling himself about theory; whereas musicians who write grammars of music are, more than often, like literary critics—atrocious composers."

"Then you do not like my music?"

"I don't say that. But, if instead of perpetually dissecting the method of idea expression—which carries you beyond the mark—you would simply awaken our sensations, I feel sure that you would be better comprehended, unless, that is, you have not entirely mistaken your vocation. You are a great poet."

"What!" cried Gambara. "What, are five-and-twenty years of study simply wasted? Am I then to learn the imperfect utterance of man—I who hold the key to the language of heaven? Ah! should you be right—then I crave to die!"

"No, no, not you. You are great, you are strong. You shall begin a new life, and I, your friend, will sustain you. We will show to the world the rare and noble alliance of a rich man and an artist who comprehend each other."

"Do you speak truth?" asked Gambara, rigid in a sudden torpor.

"As I have already said, you are more poet than musician."

"A poet, poet! That is better than nothing. But truly tell me, whom do you most esteem, Mozart or Homer?"

"I admire them equally."

"On your honor?"

"On my honor."

"H'm! One word more. What think you of Meyerbeer and Byron?"

"You have judged them by naming them together."

The Count's carriage was at the door. The composer and his titled physician were driven to Gambara's residence. They ran upstairs and were soon in Marianna's presence.

As they entered Gambara threw himself into his wife's arms, who withdrew a step and averted her head. The husband also drew back, and, beaming on the Count, said, in a husky voice:

"You might at least have left me my madness, monsieur."

Then his head drooped and he fell.

"What have you done?" cried Marianna, casting a look at her husband, in which disgust and pity were equally blended. "He is dead drunk!"

The Count with the help of his valet raised Gambara and laid him upon the

bed; then Andrea left the house, his heart glad in horrid rapture.

The next day he purposely let the hour of his daily visit pass by; he was beginning to fear that he had been duped by himself, and had paid too dearly for the comfort and virtue of that humble couple whose peace he had forever destroyed.

At length Giardini came bringing him a note from Marianna.

"Come," she wrote, "the harm done is not so great as you desired, cruel man."

"Excellenza," said the cook, while Andrea was dressing, "you entertained right royally last night. But you must allow that, apart from the wines, which were excellent, your *maître d'hôtel* did not produce a single dish worthy an epicure's table. You won't deny, I suppose, that the dish placed before you, on the day you honored my table with your presence, was superlatively better than those that sullied your service of plate last evening? Consequently, when I awoke this morning, I remembered the promise you had made me to become your chef. I henceforth consider myself as one of your household."

"I have had the same thought in my mind for the past few days," replied Andrea. "I have mentioned your name to the Austrian ambassador, and you will be allowed to recross the Alps as soon as you please. In Croatia I have a castle which I seldom visit. There you may combine the offices of porter, butler, cook, and steward, with two hundred crowns a year. This emolument will also be that of your wife, who can do the rest of the work. You can there try all your experiments *in anima vili*—that is to say, on the stomachs of my vassals. Here is a check for the costs of your journey."

Giardini kissed the Count's hand, in the Neapolitan fashion.

"Excellenza," said he, "I accept the check, but not the position. It would be dishonoring in me to give up my art and lose the good opinion of the most perfect epicures, who are undoubtedly those of Paris."

When Andrea arrived at Gambara's apartments the composer arose and came forward to meet him.

"My generous friend," said he frankly, "either it is that you took advantage of the weakness of my head to play a joke on me last night, or else your brain is no whit stronger, when testing the heady fumes of our native Latium, than mine is. I choose the latter hypothesis; I prefer to doubt your stomach than your heart. Be this as it may, I from this renounce the use of wine—forever. Last evening the abuse of good liqueur led me into culpable folly. When I call to mind that I nearly degraded——" He glanced in terror at Marianna.

"As to that wretched opera you took me to hear, I have thought it over; it is naught but music made by very ordinary methods; a heap of piled-up notes —*verba et voces*. It is but the dregs of the nectar which I quaff in deep draughts as I reproduce the heavenly music that I hear. I know the origin of those patched-up phrases. That *'Gloire à la Providence!'* is too like Handel; the chorus of knights on their way to the lists is closely related to the Scotch air in *La Dame Blanche*. In short, if the opera is pleasing, it is simply because the music is borrowed from

everybody and is therefore generally known.

"I must now leave you, my dear friend. Since morning I have had an idea seething in my brain which bids me rise to God on the wings of song; but I wished to see you and say this much to you. Adieu! I go to ask forgiveness of my Muse. We shall meet this evening at dinner; but no more wine—at least not for me. Oh! I am firmly resolved——"

"I give him up," said Andrea, blushing violently.

"You enlighten my conscience," said Marianna, "I dared not question it. My friend, my friend, the fault is not ours; he *won't* let us cure him."

Six years later, in January 1837, such musical artists as were unlucky enough to injure their wind or string instruments were in the habit of taking them to the Rue Froidmanteau, to a squalid, disreputable house where the said instruments were repaired by an old Italian named Gambara, who resided on the sixth floor.

For the past five years this man had lived alone, his wife having deserted him. An instrument, called by him a *panharmonicon,* from which he expected fame, had been sold at auction by the sheriff, on the Place du Châtelet, in addition to a great pile of musical manuscript thickly scrawled. The day after the sale, this said paper appeared in the markets wrapped around pats of butter, fish, and fruits.

In this manner the three grand operas —of which the poor man would often boast, though a once-celebrated Neapolitan cook, now a vendor of broken victuals, declared they were but a mass of rubbish—were scattered throughout Paris in the baskets of hucksters. But what matter?—the landlord had gotten his rent, the sheriff's men their fees.

The Neapolitan victual-monger, who had as regular customers the prostitutes of the Rue Froidmanteau for his warmed-up scraps, which were the crumbs from the fine banquets given by society on the previous night, was always ready to tell that Signora Gambara had gone off to Italy with a nobleman of Milan, and no one knew what had become of her. Weary of poverty and wretchedness, she was more than likely ruining the Count by a career of extravagant luxury, for they adored each other with so fierce a passion that he had never in all his Neapolitan experience beheld the like.

Toward the end of this same month, January, one evening as Giardini was chatting with a girl, who had chanced in to buy her supper, about the beautiful Marianna, so pure, so glorious, so nobly self-devoted, and who had, notwithstanding, gone the *way of all the rest,* the street-girl and the wife of Giardini noticed in the street a tall, thin woman, with a sunburnt, dusty face; a nervous walking skeleton, who was peering at all the numbers and trying to recognize a house.

"Ecco la Marianna!" cried Giardini.

Marianna recognized the one-time cook in the poor object, but gave no heed to the misfortunes which had reduced him to his present wretched trade as a dealer in second-hand food. She went in and sat down; she had walked from Fontainebleau; she had walked fourteen leagues that day, after begging her bread from Turin to Paris.

The sight of her horrified that miserable trio. Of all her marvelous loveliness naught now remained but a pair of fading, anguished eyes. The one thing faithful to her was misfortune.

The old mender of instruments heartily welcomed her; he greeted her with inexpressible joy.

"Here you are, my poor Marianna!" he said affectionately. "During your absence they sold my instrument and my operas."

It would have been a difficult job to kill the fatted calf for the prodigal returned; but Giardini produced the fag-end of a salmon, the street-walker paid for the wine, Gambara found the bread, Signora Giardini lent a tablecloth, and these diverse unfortunates supped together in the musician's garret.

When questioned about her adventures, Marianna refused to reply, but she raised her fine eyes to heaven and whispered to Giardini:

"He married a ballet-girl."

"And how do you mean to live?" asked the girl. "The journey from Milan has killed you and——"

"Made me an old woman," said Marianna. "No, it is not fatigue, not poverty, it is grief that has done this."

"Bah! why, then, did you never send your man here any money?"

Marianna only answered by a look, but it stabbed the woman to the heart.

"She ain't proud at all! oh, no!" she exclaimed. "But much good it has done her," she whispered in Giardini's ear.

That year it seemed that every musician took extraordinary care of his instrument, and the business of repairing them dropped to *nil,* or to less than sufficient to provide for the daily bread of that poor household. The wife earned little by her needle, and they were compelled to turn their talents to account in the meanest occupation.

In the dusk they would go together to the Champs-Élysées and sing duets, and Gambara, poor soul, accompanied on a wretched guitar. On the way thither Marianna, who always concealed her head under a sort of veil of lawn, would take her husband to a grocery in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré and give him two or three nips of brandy to make him tipsy; otherwise he could not play but intolerably. Then they would stand up together before the gay world seated on chairs along the esplanade, and the greatest genius of the day, the unrecognized Orpheus of modern music, played fragments of his operas to the crowd. These were so remarkable that they were able to extract a few sous from Parisian supineness.

One day a *dilettante* of the Bouffons happened to be sitting there, and, not recognizing from what opera they were taken, questioned the woman in the Grecian head-dress, when she held out the stamped, round metallic plate on which she collected her charity.

"I say, my dear, from what music is that?"

"From the opera of *Mahomet,*" Marianna replied.

As Rossini had composed an opera, *Mahomet II.,* the gentleman remarked to the lady:

"What a pity that they will not give us at the Italiens those works of Rossini that are known the least. Certain it is that this is glorious music."

Gambara smiled.

A few days ago it was necessary for this poor couple to pay the paltry sum of thirty-six francs as arrears of rent due on their miserable garret. The grocer refused to give credit for the brandy with which Marianna plied her husband to enable him to play. Gambara was thus so atrociously bad that it became insufferable; the ears of the rich were irresponsive—the tin bottle-stand remained empty.

It was nine o'clock in the evening when a beautiful Italian, the Principessa Massimilla di Varese,[1] took pity on the poor creatures. She gave Marianna forty francs and questioned both, after discovering from the wife's thanks that she was a Venetian. Prince Emilio, who accompanied his wife, would learn the history of their distress, and Marianna detailed all, making no complaints against God or man.

"Madame," said Gambara, who was not drunk, "we are the victims of our own superiority. My music is good; but so soon as music rises from sensation to idea, only persons of genius should be the hearers, for only they are capable of responding to it! It has been my misfortune to hear the chorus of angels; I believed that men could understand those strains. It is thus with women when their love assumes a divine aspect: men can no longer comprehend them."

These words were well worth the forty francs bestowed by Massimilla; she drew out another gold-piece from her purse, saying, as she give it to Marianna, that she would write Andrea Marcosini.

"Do not write him, madame!" exclaimed Marianna. "And God grant you may be beautiful forever!"

"Let us provide for them," said the princess to her husband; "this man has remained faithful to the IDEAL which *we* have killed."

When Gambara saw the gold he wept; then there came to him a vague reminiscence of some old scientific experiment, and the wretched composer, as he wiped away his tears, uttered these words, which the attendant circumstances made piteous:

"Water is produced by burning."

[1] See *Massimilla Doni.*

Melmoth Reconciled

To M. le Général Baron de Pommereul, a token of the friendship between our fathers, which survives in their sons

De Balzac.

THERE is a special variety of human nature obtained in the Social Kingdom by a process analogous to that of the gardener's craft in the Vegetable Kingdom, to wit, by the forcing-house—a species of hybrid which can be raised neither from seed nor from slips. This product is known as the Cashier, an anthropomorphous growth, watered by religious doctrine, trained up in fear of the guillotine, pruned by vice, to flourish on a third floor with an estimable wife by his side and an uninteresting family. The number of cashiers in Paris must

always be a problem for the physiologist. Has anyone as yet been able to state correctly the terms of the proportion sum wherein the cashier figures as the unknown *x*? Where will you find the man who shall live with wealth, like a cat with a caged mouse? This man, for further qualification, shall be capable of sitting boxed in behind an iron grating for seven or eight hours a day during seven-eighths of the year, perched upon a cane-seated chair in a space as narrow as a lieutenant's cabin on board a man-of-war. Such a man must be able to defy anchylosis of the knee and thigh joints; he must have a soul above meanness, in order to live meanly; must lose all relish for money by dint of handling it. Demand this peculiar specimen of any creed, educational system, school, or institution you please, and select Paris, that city of fiery ordeals and branch establishment of hell, as the soil in which to plant the said cashier. So be it. Creeds, schools, institutions, and moral systems, all human rules and regulations, great and small, will, one after another, present much the same face that an intimate friend turns upon you when you ask him to lend you a thousand francs. With a dolorous dropping of the jaw, they indicate the guillotine, much as your friend aforesaid will furnish you with the address of the money-lender, pointing you to one of the hundred gates by which a man comes to the last refuge of the destitute.

Yet nature has her freaks in the making of a man's mind; she indulges herself and makes a few honest folk now and again, and now and then a cashier.

Wherefore, that race of corsairs whom we dignify with the title of bankers, the gentry who take out a license for which they pay a thousand crowns, as the privateer takes out his letters of marque, hold these rare products of the incubations of virtue in such esteem that they confine them in cages in their counting-houses, much as governments procure and maintain specimens of strange beasts at their own charges.

If the cashier is possessed of an imagination or of a fervid temperament; if, as will sometimes happen to the most complete cashier, he loves his wife, and that wife grows tired of her lot, has ambitions, or merely some vanity in her composition, the cashier is undone. Search the chronicles of the counting-house. You will not find a single instance of a cashier attending *a position*, as it is called. They are sent to the hulks; they go to foreign parts; they vegetate on a second floor in the Rue Saint-Louis among the market gardens of the Marais. Some day, when the cashiers of Paris come to a sense of their real value, a cashier will be hardly obtainable for money. Still, certain it is that there are people who are fit for nothing but to be cashiers, just as the bent of a certain order of mind inevitably makes for rascality. But, oh marvel of our civilization! Society rewards virtue with an income of a hundred louis in old age, a dwelling on a second floor, bread sufficient, occasional new bandanna handkerchiefs, an elderly wife and her offspring.

So much for virtue. But for the opposite course, a little boldness, a faculty for keeping on the windward side of the law, as Turenne outflanked Montecuculli, and Society will sanction the theft of millions, shower ribands upon the thief,

cram him with honors, and smother him with consideration.

Government, moreover, works harmoniously with this profoundly illogical reasoner—Society. Government levies a conscription on the young intelligence of the kingdom at the age of seventeen or eighteen, a conscription of precocious power. Great ability is prematurely exhausted by excessive brain-work before it is sent up to be submitted to a process of selection. Nurserymen sort and select seeds in much the same way. To this process the Government brings professional appraisers of talent, men who can assay brains as experts assay gold at the Mint. Five hundred such heads, set afire with hope, are sent up annually by the most progressive portion of the population; and of these the Government takes one-third, puts them in sacks called the Écoles, and shakes them up together for three years. Though every one of these young plants represents vast productive power, they are made, as one may say, into cashiers. They receive appointments; the rank and file of engineers is made up of them; they are employed as captains of artillery; there is no (subaltern) grade to which they may not aspire. Finally, when these men, the pick of the youth of the nation, fattened on mathematics and stuffed with knowledge, have attained the age of fifty years, they have their reward, and receive as the price of their services the third-floor lodging, the wife and family, and all the comforts that sweeten life for mediocrity. If from among this race of dupes there should escape some five or six men of genius who climb the highest heights, is it not miraculous?

This is an exact statement of the relations between Talent and Probity on the one hand, and Government and Society on the other, in an age that considers itself to be progressive. Without this prefatory explanation a recent occurrence in Paris would seem improbable; but preceded by this summing up of the situation, it will perhaps receive some thuoghtful attention from minds capable of recognizing the real plague-spots of our civilization, a civilization which since 1815 has been moved by the spirit of gain rather than by principles of honor.

About five o'clock, on a dull autumn afternoon, the cashier of one of the largest banks in Paris was still at his desk, working by the light of a lamp that had been lit for some time. In accordance with the use and wont of commerce, the counting-house was in the darkest corner of the low-ceiled and far from spacious mezzanine floor, and at the very end of a passage lighted only by borrowed lights. The office doors along this corridor, each with its label, gave the place the look of a bath-house. At four o'clock the stolid porter had proclaimed, according to his orders, "The bank is closed." And by this time the departments were deserted, the letters dispatched, the clerks had taken their leave. The wives of the partners in the firm were expecting their lovers; the two bankers dining with their mistresses. Everything was in order.

The place where the strong boxes had been bedded in sheet-iron was just behind the little sanctum, where the cashier was busy. Doubtless he was balancing his books. The open front gave a gilmpse of a safe of hammered iron, so enormously heavy (thanks to the science of

the modern inventor) that burglars could not carry it way. The door only opened at the pleasure of those who knew its password. The letter-lock was a warden who kept its own secret and could not be bribed; the mysterious word was an ingenious realization of the "Open sesame!" in the *Arabian Nights*. But even this was as nothing. A man might discover the password; but unless he knew the lock's final secret, the *ultima ratio* of this gold-guarding dragon of mechanical science, it discharged a blunderbuss at his head.

The door of the room, the walls of the room, the shutters of the windows in the room, the whole place, in fact, was lined with sheet-iron a third of an inch in thickness, concealed behind the thin wooden paneling. The shutters had been closed, the door had been shut. If ever man could feel confident that he was absolutely alone, and that there was no remote possibility of being watched by prying eyes, that man was the cashier of the house of Nucingen and Company, in the Rue Saint-Lazare.

Accordingly the deepest silence prevailed in that iron cave. The fire had died out in the stove, but the room was full of that tepid warmth which produces the dull heavy-headedness and nauseous queasiness of a morning after an orgy. The stove is a mesmerist that plays no small part in the reduction of bank clerks and porters to a state of idiocy.

A room with a stove in it is a retort in which the power of strong men is evaporated, where their vitality is exhausted, and their wills enfeebled. Government offices are part of a great scheme for the manufacture of the mediocrity necessary for the maintenance of a Feudal System on a pecuniary basis —and money is the foundation of the Social Contract. (See *Les Employés*.) The mephitic vapors in the atmosphere of a crowded room contribute in no small degree to bring about a gradual deterioration of intelligences, the brain that gives off the largest quantity of nitrogen asphyxiates the others, in the long run.

The cashier was a man of five-and-forty or thereabouts. As he sat the table, the light from a moderator lamp shining full on his bald head and glistening fringe of iron-gray hair that surrounded it—this baldness and the round outlines of his face made his head look very like a ball. His complexion was brick-red, a few wrinkles had gathered about his eyes, but he had the smooth, plump hands of a stout man. His blue cloth coat, a little rubbed and worn, and the creases and shininess of his trousers, traces of hard wear that the clothes-brush fails to remove, would impress a superficial observer with the idea that here was a thrifty and upright human being, sufficient of the philosopher or of the aristocrat to wear shabby clothes. But, unluckily, it is easy to find penny-wise people who will prove weak, wasteful, or incompetent in the capital things of life.

The cashier wore the ribbon of the Legion of Honor at his buttonhole, for he had been a major of dragoons in the time of the Emperor. M. de Nucingen, who had been a contractor before he became a banker, had had reason in those days to know the honorable disposition of his cashier, who then occupied a high position. Reverses of for-

tune had befallen the major, and the banker out of regard for him paid him five hundred francs a month. The soldier had become a cashier in the year 1813, after his recovery from a wound received at Studzianka during the Retreat from Moscow, followed by six months of enforced idleness at Strasbourg, whither several officers had been transported by order of the Emperor, that they might receive skilled attention. This particular officer, Castanier by name, retired with the honorary grade of colonel, and a pension of two thousand four hundred francs.

In ten years' time the cashier had completely effaced the soldier, and Castanier inspired the banker with such trust in him, that he was associated in the transactions that went on in the private office behind his little counting-house. The Baron himself had access to it by means of a secret staircase. There, matters of business were decided. It was the bolting-room where proposals were sifted; the privy council chamber where the reports of the money market were analyzed; circular notes issued thence; and finally, the private ledger and the journal which summarized the work of all the departments were kept there.

Castanier had gone himself to shut the door which opened on to a staircase that led to the parlor occupied by the two bankers on the first floor of their hôtel. This done, he had sat down at his desk again, and for a moment he gazed at a little collection of letters of credit drawn on the firm of Watschildine of London. Then he had taken up the pen and imitated the banker's signature upon each. *Nucingen* he wrote, and eyed the forged signatures critically to see which seemed the most perfect copy.

Suddenly he looked up as if a needle had pricked him. "You are not alone!" a boding voice seemed to cry in his heart; and indeed the forger saw a man standing at the little grated window of the counting-house, a man whose breathing was so noiseless that he did not seem to breathe at all. Castanier looked, and saw that the door at the end of the passage was wide open; the stranger must have entered by that way.

For the first time in his life the old soldier felt a sensation of dread that made him stare open-mouthed and wide-eyed at the man before him; and for that matter, the appearance of the apparition was sufficiently alarming even if unaccompanied by the mysterious circumstances of so sudden an entry. The rounded forehead, the harsh coloring of the long oval face, indicated quite as plainly as the cut of his clothes that the man was an Englishman, reeking of his native isles. You had only to look at the collar of his overcoat, at the voluminous cravat which smothered the crushed frills of a shirt front so white that it brought out the changeless leaden hue of an impassive face, and the thin red line of the lips that seemed made to suck the blood of corpses; and you could guess at once at the black gaiters buttoned up to the knee, and the half-puritanical costume of a wealthy Englishman dressed for a walking excursion. The intolerable glitter of the stranger's eyes produced a vivid and unpleasant impression, which was only deepened by the rigid outlines of his features. The dried-up, emaciated creature seemed to carry within him some gnawing thought

that consumed him and could not be appeased.

He must have digested his food so rapidly that he could doubtless eat continually without bringing any trace of color into his face or features. A tun of Tokay *vin de succession* would not have caused any faltering in that piercing glance that read men's inmost thoughts, nor dethroned the merciless reasoning faculty that always seemed to go to the bottom of things. There was something of the fell and tranquil majesty of a tiger about him.

"I have come to cash this bill of exchange, sir," he said. Castanier felt the tones of his voice thrill through every nerve with a violent shock similar to that given by a discharge of electricity.

"The safe is closed," said Castanier.

"It is open," said the Englishman, looking round the counting-house. "To-morrow is Sunday, and I cannot wait. The amount is for five hundred thousand francs. You have the money there, and I must have it."

"But how did you come in, sir?"

The Englishman smiled. That smile frightened Castanier. No words could have replied more fully nor more peremptorily than that scornful and imperial curl of the stranger's lips. Castanier turned away, took up fifty packets, each containing ten thousand francs in bank-notes, and held them out to the stranger, receiving in exchange for them a bill accepted by the Baron de Nucingen. A sort of convulsive tremor ran through him as he saw a red gleam in the stranger's eyes when they fell on the forged signature on the letter of credit.

"It . . . it wants your signature . . ." stammered Castanier, handing back the bill.

"Hand me your pen," answered the Englishman.

Castanier handed him the pen with which he had just committed forgery. The stranger wrote *John Melmoth*, then he returned the slip of paper and the pen to the cashier. Castanier looked at the handwriting, noticing that it sloped from right to left in the Eastern fashion, and Melmoth disappeared so noiselessly that when Castanier looked up again an exclamation broke from him, partly because the man was no longer there, partly because he felt a strange painful sensation such as our imagination might take for an effect of poison.

The pen that Melmoth had handled sent the same sickening heat through him that an emetic produces. But it seemed impossible to Castanier that the Englishman should have guessed his crime. His inward qualms he attributed to the palpitation of the heart that, according to received ideas, was sure to follow at once on such a "turn" as the stranger had given him.

"The devil take it; I am very stupid. Providence is watching over me; for if that brute had come round to see my gentlemen to-morrow, my goose would have been cooked!" said Castanier, and he burned the unsuccessful attempts at forgery in the stove.

He put the bill that he meant to take with him in an envelope, and helped himself to five hundred thousand francs in French and English bank-notes from the safe, which he locked. Then he put everything in order, lit a candle, blew out the lamp, took up his hat and umbrella, and went out sedately, as usual, to leave

one of the two keys of the strong room with Mme. de Nucingen, in the absence of her husband the Baron.

"You are in luck, M. Castanier," said the banker's wife as he entered her room; "we have a holiday on Monday; you can go into the country, or to Soizy."

"Madame, will you be so good as to tell your husband that the bill of exchange on Watschildine, which was behind time, has just been presented? The five hundred thousand francs have been paid; so I shall not come back till noon on Tuesday."

"Good-by, monsieur; I hope you will have a pleasant time."

"The same to you, madame," replied the old dragoon as he went out. He glanced as he spoke at a young man well known in fashionable society at that time, a M. de Rastignac, who was regarded as Mme. de Nucingen's lover.

"Madame," remarked this latter, "the old boy looks to me as if he meant to play you some ill turn."

"Pshaw! impossible; he is too stupid."

"Piquoizeau," said the cashier, walking into the porter's room, "what made you let anybody come up after four o'clock?"

"I have been smoking a pipe here in the doorway ever since four o'clock," said the man, "and nobody has gone into the bank. Nobody has come out either except the gentlemen——"

"Are you quite sure?"

"Yes, upon my word and honor. Stay, though, at four o'clock M. Werbrust's friend came, a young fellow from Messrs. du Tillet & Co., in the Rue Joubert."

"All right," said Castanier, and he hurried away.

The sickening sensation of heat that he had felt when he took back the pen returned in greater intensity. *"Mlle diables!"* thought he, as he threaded his way along the Boulevard de Gand, "haven't I taken proper precautions? Let me think! Two clear days, Sunday and Monday, then a day of uncertainty before they begin to look for me; altogether, three days and four nights' respite. I have a couple of passports and two different disguises; is not that enough to throw the cleverest detective off the scent? On Tuesday morning I shall draw a million francs in London before the slightest suspicion has been aroused. My debts I am leaving behind for the benefit of my creditors, who will put a 'P'[1] on the bills, and I shall live comfortably in Italy for the rest of my days as the Conte Ferraro. I was alone with him when he died, poor fellow, in the marsh of Zembin, and I shall slip into his skin. . . . *Mille diables!* the woman who is to follow after me might give them a clew! Think of an old campaigner like me infatuated enough to tie myself to a petticoat tail! . . . Why take her? I must leave her behind. Yes, I could make up my mind to it; but—I know myself—I should be ass enough to go back for her. Still, nobody knows Aquilina. Shall I take her or leave her?"

"You will not take her!" cried a voice that filled Castanier with sickening dread. He turned sharply, and saw the Englishman.

"The Devil is in it!" cried the cashier aloud.

Melmoth had passed his victim by this time; and if Castanier's first impulse had been to fasten a quarrel on a man who

[1] Protested.

read his own thoughts, he was so much torn by opposing feelings that the immediate result was a temporary paralysis. When he resumed his walk he fell once more into that fever of irresolution which besets those who are so carried away by passion that they are ready to commit a crime, but have not sufficient strength of character to keep it to themselves without suffering terribly in the process. So, although Castanier had made up his mind to reap the fruits of a crime which was already half executed, he hesitated to carry out his designs. For him, as for many men of mixed character in whom weakness and strength are equally blended, the least trifling consideration determines whether they shall continue to lead blameless lives or become actively criminal. In the vast masses of men enrolled in Napoleon's armies there were many who, like Castanier, possessed the purely physical courage demanded on the battlefield, yet lacked the moral courage which makes a man as great in crime as he could have been in virtue.

The letter of credit was drafted in such terms that immediately on his arrival he might draw twenty-five thousand pounds on the firm of Watschildine, the London correspondents of the house of Nucingen. The London house had been already advised of the draft about to be made upon them; he had written to them himself. He had instructed an agent (chosen at random) to take his passage in a vessel which was to leave Portsmouth with a wealthy English family on board, who were going to Italy, and the passage money had been paid in the name of the Conte Ferraro. The smallest details of the scheme had been thought out. He had arranged matters so as to divert the search that would be made for him into Belgium and Switzerland, while he himself was at sea in the English vessel. Then, by the time that Nucingen might flatter himself that he was on the track of his late cashier, the said cashier, as the Conte Ferraro, hoped to be safe in Naples. He had determined to disfigure his face in order to disguise himself the more completely, and by means of an acid to imitate the scars of smallpox. Yet, in spite of all these precautions, which surely seemed as if they must secure him complete immunity, his conscience tormented him; he was afraid. The even and peaceful life that he had led so long had modified the morality of the camp. His life was stainless as yet; he could not sully it without a pang. So for the last time he abandoned himself to all the influences of the better self that strenuously resisted.

"Pshaw!" he said at last, at the corner of the boulevard and the Rue Montmartre, "I will take a cab after the play this evening and go out to Versailles. A post-chaise will be ready for me at my old quartermaster's place. He would keep my secret even if a dozen men were standing ready to shoot him down. The chances are all in my favor, so far as I see; so I shall take my little Naqui with me, and I will go."

"You will not go!" exclaimed the Englishman, and the strange tones of his voice drove all the cashier's blood back to his heart.

Melmoth stepped into a tilbury which was waiting for him, and was whirled away so quickly, that when Castanier looked up he saw his foe some hundred paces away from him, and before it even

crossed his mind to cut off the man's retreat the tilbury was far on its way up the Boulevard Montmartre.

"Well, upon my word, there is something supernatural about this!" said he to himself. "If I were fool enough to believe in God, I should think that He had set Saint Michael on my tracks. Suppose that the Devil and the police should let me go on as I please, so as to nab me in the nick of time? Did anyone ever see the like! But there, this is folly. . . ."

Castanier went along the Rue due Faubourg-Montmartre, slackening his pace as he neared the Rue Richer. There, on the second floor of a block of buildings which looked out upon some gardens, lived the unconscious cause of Castanier's crime—a young woman known in the quarter as Mme. de la Garde. A concise history of certain events in the cashier's past life must be given in order to explain these facts, and to give a complete presentment of the crisis when he yielded to temptation.

Mme. de la Garde said that she was a Piedmontese. No one, not even Castanier, knew her real name. She was one of those young girls who are driven by dire misery, by inability to earn a living, or by fear of starvation, to have recourse to a trade which most of them loathe, many regard with indifference, and some few follow in obedience to the laws of their constitution. But on the brink of the gulf of prostitution in Paris, the young girl of sixteen, beautiful and pure as the Madonna, had met with Castanier. The old dragoon was too rough and homely to make his way in society, and he was tired of tramping the boulevard at night and of the kind of conquests made there by gold. For some time past he had desired to bring a certain regularity into an irregular life. He was struck by the beauty of the poor child who had drifted by chance into his arms, and his determination to rescue her from the life of the streets was half benevolent, half selfish, as some of the thoughts of the best of men are apt to be. Social conditions mingle elements of evil with the promptings of natural goodness of heart, and the mixture of motives underlying a man's intentions should be leniently judged. Castanier had just cleverness enough to be very shrewd where his own interests were concerned. So he concluded to be a philanthropist on either count, and at first made her his mistress.

"Hey! hey!" he said to himself, in his soldierly fashion, "I am an old wolf, and a sheep shall not make a fool of me. Castanier, old man, before you set up housekeeping, reconnoiter the girl's character for a bit, and see if she is a steady sort."

This irregular union gave the Piedmontese a status the most nearly approaching respectability among those which the world declines to recognize. During the first year she took the *nom de guerre* of Aquilina, one of the characters in *Venice Preserved* which she had chanced to read. She fancied that she resembled the courtesan in face and general appearance, and in a certain precocity of heart and brain of which she was conscious. When Castanier found that her life was as well regulated and virtuous as was possible for a social outlaw, he manifested a desire that they should live as husband and wife. So she took the name of Mme. de la Garde, in

order to approach, as closely as Parisian usages permit, the conditions of a real marriage. As a matter of fact, many of these unfortunate girls have one fixed idea, to be looked upon as respectable middle-class women, who lead humdrum lives of faithfulness to their husbands; women who would make excellent mothers, keepers of household accounts, and menders of household linen. This longing springs from a sentiment so laudable, that society should take it into consideration. But society, incorrigible as ever, will assuredly persist in regarding the married woman as a corvette duly authorized by her flag and papers to go on her own course, while the woman who is a wife in all but name is a pirate and an outlaw for lack of a document. A day came when Mme. de la Garde would fain have signed herself "Mme. Castanier." The cashier was put out by this.

"So you do not love me well enough to marry me?" she said.

Castanier did not answer; he was absorbed by his thoughts. The poor girl resigned herself to her fate. The ex-dragoon was in despair. Naqui's heart softened towards him at the sight of his trouble; she tried to soothe him, but what could she do when she did not know what ailed him? When Naqui made up her mind to know the secret, although she never asked him a question, the cashier dolefully confessed to the existence of a Mme. Castanier. This lawful wife, a thousand times accursed, was living in a humble way in Strasbourg on a small property there; he wrote to her twice a year, and kept the secret of her existence so well, that no one suspected that he was married. The reason of this reticence? If it is familiar to many military men who may chance to be in a like predicament, it is perhaps worth while to give the story.

Your genuine trooper (if it is allowable here to employ the word which in the army signifies a man who is destined to die as a captain) is a sort of serf, a part and parcel of his regiment, an essentially simple creature, and Castanier was marked out by nature as a victim to the wiles of mothers with grown-up daughters left too long on their hands. It was at Nancy, during one of those brief intervals of repose when the Imperial armies were not on active service abroad, that Castanier was so unlucky as to pay some attention to a young lady with whom he danced at a *ridotto,* the provincial name for the entertainments often given by the military to the townsfolk, or vice versa, in garrison towns. A scheme for inveigling the gallant captain into matrimony was immediately set on foot, one of those schemes by which mothers secure accomplices in a human heart by touching all its motive springs, while they convert all their friends into fellow-conspirators. Like all people possessed by one idea, these ladies press everything into the service of their great project, slowly elaborating their toils, much as the ant-lion excavates its funnel in the sand and lies in wait at the bottom for its victim. Suppose that no one strays, after all, into that carefully constructed labyrinth? Suppose that the ant-lion dies of hunger and thirst in her pit? Such things may be, but if any heedless creature once enters in, it never comes out. All the wires which could be pulled to induce action on the captain's part were tried; appeals

were made to the secret interested motives that always come into play in such cases; they worked on Castanier's hopes and on the weaknesses and vanity of human nature. Unluckily, he had praised the daughter to her mother when he brought her back after a waltz, a little chat followed, and then an invitation in the most natural way in the world. Once introduced into the house, the dragoon was dazzled by the hospitality of a family who appeared to conceal their real wealth beneath a show of careful economy. He was skillfully flattered on all sides, and everyone extolled for his benefit the various treasures there displayed. A neatly timed dinner, served on plate lent by an uncle, the attention shown to him by the only daughter of the house, the gossip of the town, a well-to-do sub-lieutenant who seemed likely to cut the ground from under his feet—all the innumerable snares, in short, of the provincial ant-lion were set for him, and to such good purpose, that Castanier said five years later, "To this day I do not know how it came about!"

The dragoon received fifteen thousand francs with the lady, who, after two years of marriage, became the ugliest and consequently the most peevish woman on earth. Luckily they had no children. The fair complexion (maintained by a Spartan regimen), the fresh, bright color in her face, which spoke of an engaging modesty, became overspread with blotches and pimples; her figure, which had seemed so straight, grew crooked, the angel became a suspicious and shrewish creature who drove Castanier frantic. Then the fortune took to itself wings. At length the dragoon, no longer recognizing the woman whom he had wedded, left her to live on a little property at Strasbourg, until the time when it should please God to remove her to adorn Paradise. She was one of those virtuous women who, for want of other occupation, would weary the life out of an angel with complainings, who pray till (if their prayers are heard in heaven) they must exhaust the patience of the Almighty, and say everything that is bad of their husbands in dove-like murmurs over a game of boston with their neighbors. When Aquilina learned all these troubles she clung still more affectionately to Castanier, and made him so happy, varying with woman's ingenuity the pleasures with which she filled his life, that all unwittingly she was the cause of the cashier's downfall.

Like many women who seem by nature destined to sound all the depths of love, Mme. de la Garde was disinterested. She asked neither for gold nor for jewelry, gave no thought to the future, lived entirely for the present and for the pleasures of the present. The accepted expensive ornaments and dresses, the carriage so eagerly coveted by women of her class, as one harmony the more in the picture of life. There was absolutely no vanity in her desire not to appear at a better advantage but to look the fairer, and, moreover, no woman could live without luxuries more cheerfully. When a man of generous nature (and military men are mostly of this stamp) meets with such a woman, he feels a sort of exasperation at finding himself her debtor in generosity. He feels that he could stop a mail coach to obtain money for her if he has not sufficient for her whims. He will commit a crime if so he may be great and noble in the eyes

of some woman or of his special public; such is the nature of the man. Such a lover is like a gambler who would be dishonored in his own eyes if he did not repay the sum he borrowed from a waiter in a gaming-house; but will shrink from no crime, will leave his wife and children without a penny, and rob and murder, if so he may come to the gaming-table with a full purse, and his honor remain untarnished among the frequenters of that fatal abode. So it was with Castanier.

He had begun by installing Aquilina in a modest fourth-floor dwelling, the furniture being of the simplest kind. But when he saw the girl's beauty and great qualities, when he had known inexpressible and unlooked-for happiness with her, he began to dote upon her, and longed to adorn his idol. Then Aquilina's toilette was so comically out of keeping with her poor abode, that for both their sakes it was clearly incumbent on him to move. The change swallowed up almost all Castanier's savings, for he furnished his domestic paradise with all the prodigality that is lavished on a kept mistress. A pretty woman must have everything pretty about her; the unity of charm in the woman and her surroundings singles her out from among her sex. This sentiment of homogeneity indeed, though it has frequently escaped the attention of observers, is instinctive in human nature; and the same prompting leads elderly spinsters to surround themselves with dreary relics of the past. But the lovely Piedmontese must have the newest and latest fashions, and all that was daintiest and prettiest in stuffs for hangings, in silks or jewelry, in fine china and other brittle and fragile wares. She asked for nothing; but when she was called upon to make a choice, when Castanier asked her, "Which do you like?" she would answer, "Why, this is the nicest!" Love never counts the cost, and Castanier therefore always took the "nicest."

When once the standard had been set up, there was nothing for it but everything in the household must be in conformity, from the linen plate and crystal through a thousand and one items of expenditure down to the pots and pans in the kitchen. Castanier had meant to "do things simply," as the saying goes, but he gradually found himself more and more in debt. One expense entailed another. The clock called for candle sconces. Fires must be lighted in the ornamental grates, but the curtains and hangings were too fresh and delicate to be soiled by smuts, so they must be replaced by patent and elaborate fireplaces, warranted to give out no smoke, recent inventions of the people who are clever at drawing up a prospectus. Then Acquilina found it so nice to run about barefooted on the carpet in her room, that Castanier must have soft carpets laid everywhere for the pleasure of playing with Naqui. A bathroom, too, was built for her, everything to the end that she might be more comfortable.

Shopkeepers, workmen, and manufacturers in Paris have a mysterious knack of enlarging a hole in a man's purse. They cannot give the price of anything upon inquiry; and as the paroxysm of longing cannot abide delay, orders are given by the feeble light of an approximate estimate of cost. The same people never send in the bills at once, but ply the purchaser with furniture till his head

spins. Everything is so pretty, so charming; and everyone is satisfied.

A few months later the obliging furniture dealers are metamorphosed, and reappear in the shape of alarming totals on invoices that fill the soul with their horrid clamor; they are in urgent want of the money; they are, as you may say, on the brink of bankruptcy, their tears flow, it is heart-rending to hear them! And then—the gulf yawns, and gives up serried columns of figures marching four deep, when as a matter of fact they should have issued innocently three by three.

Before Castanier had any idea of how much he had spent, he had arranged for Aquilina to have a carriage from a livery stable when she went out, instead of a cab. Castanier was a gourmand; he engaged an excellent cook; and Aquilina, to please him, had herself made the purchases of early fruit and vegetables, rare delicacies, and exquisite wines. But, as Aquilina had nothing of her own, these gifts of hers, so precious by reason of the thought and tact and graciousness that prompted them, were no less a drain upon Castanier's purse; he did not like his Naqui to be without money, and Naqui could not keep money in her pocket. So the table was a heavy item of expenditure for a man with Castanier's income. The ex-dragoon was compelled to resort to various shifts for obtaining money, for he could not bring himself to renounce this delightful life. He loved the woman too well to cross the freaks of the mistress. He was one of those men who, through self-love or through weakness of character, can refuse nothing to a woman; false shame overpowers them, and they rather face ruin than make the admissions: "I cannot——" "My means will not permit——" "I cannot afford——"

When, therefore, Castanier saw that if he meant to emerge from the abyss of debt into which he had plunged, he must part with Aquilina and live upon bread and water, he was so unable to do without her or to change his habits of life, that daily he put off his plans of reform until the morrow. The debts were pressing, and he began by borrowing money. His position and previous character inspired confidence, and of this he took advantage to devise a system of borrowing money as he required it. Then, as the total amount of debt rapidly increased, he had recourse to those commercial inventions known as *accommodation bills*. This form of bill does not represent goods or other value received, and the first endorser pays the amount named for the obliging person who accepts it. This species of fraud is tolerated because it is impossible to detect it, and, moreover, it is an imaginary fraud which only becomes real if payment is ultimately refused.

When at length it was evidently impossible to borrow any longer, whether because the amount of the debt was now so greatly increased, or because Castanier was unable to pay the large amount of interest on the aforesaid sums of money, the cashier saw bankruptcy before him. On making this discovery, he decided for a fraudulent bankruptcy rather than an ordinary failure, and preferred a crime to a misdemeanor. He determined, after the fashion of the celebrated cashier of the Royal Treasury, to abuse the trust deservedly won, and to increase the number of his creditors by

making a final loan of the sum sufficient to keep him in comfort in a foreign country for the rest of his days. All this, as has been seen, he had prepared to do.

Aquilina knew nothing of the irksome cares of this life; she enjoyed her existence, as many a woman does, making no inquiry as to where the money came from, even as sundry other folk will eat their buttered rolls untroubled by any restless spirit of curiosity as to the culture and growth of wheat; but as the labor and miscalculations of agriculture lie on the other side of the baker's oven, so beneath the unappreciated luxury of many a Parisian household lie intolerable anxieties and exorbitant toil.

While Castanier was enduring the torture of the strain, and his thoughts were full of the deed that should change his whole life, Aquilina was lying luxuriously back in a great armchair by the fireside, beguiling the time by chatting with her waiting-maid. As frequently happens in such cases, the maid had become the mistress's confidante, Jenny having first assured herself that her mistress's ascendency over Castanier was complete.

"What are we to do this evening? Léon seems determined to come," Mme. de la Garde was saying, as she read a passionate epistle indited upon a faint gray notepaper.

"Here is the master!" said Jenny.

Castanier came in. Aquilina, nowise disconcerted, crumpled up the letter, took it with the tongs, and held it in the flames.

"So that is what you do with your love letters, is it?" asked Castanier.

"Oh goodness, yes," said Aquilina; "is it not the best way of keeping them safe? Besides, fire should go to the fire, as water makes for the river."

"You are talking as if it were a real love letter, Naqui——"

"Well, am I not handsome enough to receive them?" she said, holding up her forehead for a kiss. There was a carelessness in her manner that would have told any man less blind than Castanier that it was only a piece of conjugal duty, as it were, to give this joy to the cashier; but use and wont had brought Castanier to the point where clear-sightedness is no longer possible for love.

"I have taken a box at the Gymnase this evening," he said; "let us have dinner early, and then we need not dine in a hurry."

"Go and take Jenny. I am tired of plays. I do not know what is the matter with me this evening; I would rather stay here by the fire."

"Come, all the same though, Naqui; I shall not be here to bore you much longer. Yes, Quiqui, I am going to start to-night, and it will be some time before I come back again. I am leaving everything in your charge. Will you keep you heart for me too?"

"Neither my heart nor anything else," she said; "but when you come back again, Naqui will still be Naqui for you."

"Well, this is frankness. So you would not follow me?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Eh! why, how can I leave the lover who writes me such sweet little notes?" she asked, pointing to the blackened scrap of paper with a mocking smile.

"Is there any truth in it?" asked Castanier. "Have you really a lover?"

"Really!" cried Aquilina; "and have you never given it a serious thought, dear? To begin with, you are fifty years old. Then you have just the sort of face to put on a fruit stall; if the woman tried to sell you for a pumpkin, no one would contradict her. You puff and blow like a seal when you come upstairs; your paunch rises and falls like the diamond on a woman's forehead! It is pretty plain that you served in the dragoons; you are a very ugly-looking old man. Fiddle-de-dee. If you have any mind to keep my respect, I recommend you not to add imbecility to these qualities by imagining that such a girl as I am will be content with your asthmatic love, and not look for youth and good looks and pleasure by way of a variety——"

"Aquilina! you are laughing, of course?"

"Oh, very well; and are you not laughing too? Do you take me for a fool, telling me that you are going away? 'I am going to start to-night!' she said, mimicking his tones. Stuff and nonsense! Would you talk like that if you were really going away from your Naqui? You would cry, like the booby that you are!"

"After all, if I go, will you follow?" he asked.

"Tell me first whether this journey of yours is a bad joke or not."

"Yes, seriously, I am going."

"Well, then seriously, I shall stay. A pleasant journey to you, my boy! I will wait till you come back. I would sooner take leave of life than take leave of my dear, cosy Paris——"

"Will you not come to Italy, to Naples, and lead a pleasant life there—a delicious, luxurious life, with this stout old fogery of yours, who puffs and blows like a seal?"

"No."

"Ungrateful girl!"

"Ungrateful?" she cried, rising to her feet. "I might leave this house this moment and take nothing out of it but myself. I shall have given you all the treasures a young girl can give, and something that not every drop in your veins and mine can ever give me back. If, by any means whatever, by selling my hopes of eternity, for instance, I could recover my past self, body as soul (for I have, perhaps, redeemed my soul), and be pure as a lily for my lover, I would not hesitate a moment! What sort of devotion has rewarded mine? You have housed and fed me, just as you give a dog food and a kennel because he is a protection to the house, and he may take kicks when we are out of humor, and lick our hands as soon as we are pleased to call to him. And which of us two will have been the more generous?"

"Oh! dear child, do you not see that I am joking?" returned Castanier. "I am going on a short journey; I shall not be away for very long. But come with me to the Gymnase; I shall start just before midnight, after I have had time to say good-by to you."

"Poor pet! so you are really going, are you?" she said. She put her arms round his neck, and drew down his head against her bodice.

"You are smothering me!" cried Castanier, with his face buried in Aquilina's breast. That damsel turned to say in Jenny's ear, "Go to Léon, and tell him not to come till one o'clock. If

you do not find him, and he comes here during the leave-taking, keep him in your room.—Well," she went on, setting free Castanier, and giving a tweak to the tip of his nose, "Never mind, handsomest of seals that you are. I will go to the theater with you this evening. But all in good time; let us have dinner! There is a nice little dinner for you—just what you like."

"It is very hard to part from such a woman as you!" exclaimed Castanier.

"Very well then, why do you go?" asked she.

"Ah! why? why? If I were to begin to explain the reasons why, I must tell you things that would prove to you that I love you almost to madness. Ah! if you have sacrificed your honor for me, I have sold mine for you; we are quits. Is that love?"

"What is all this about?" said she. "Come, now, promise me that if I had a lover you would still love me as a father; that would be love! Come, now, promise it at once, and give us your fist upon it."

"I should kill you," and Castanier smiled as he spoke.

They sat down to the dinner table, and went thence to the Gymnase. When the first part of the performance was over, it occurred to Castanier to show himself to some of his acquaintances in the house, so as to turn away any suspicion of his departure. He left Mme. de la Garde in the corner box where she was seated, according to her modest wont, and went to walk up and down in the lobby. He had not gone many paces before he saw the Englishman, and with a sudden return of the sickening sensation of heat that once before had vibrated through him, and of the terror that he had felt already, he stood face to face with Melmoth.

"Forger!"

At the word, Castainer glanced round at the people who were moving about them. He fancied that he could see astonishment and curiosity in their eyes, and wishing to be rid of this Englishman at once, he raised his hand to strike him—and felt his arm paralyzed by some invisible power that sapped his strength and nailed him to the spot. He allowed the stranger to take him by the arm, and they walked together to the green-room like two friends.

"Who is strong enough to resist me?" said the Englishman, addressing him. "Do you not know that everything here on earth must obey me, that it is in my power to do everything. I read men's thoughts, I see the future, and I know the past. I am here, and I can be elsewhere also. Time and space and distance are nothing to me. The whole world is at my beck and call. I have the power of continual enjoyment and of giving joy. I can see through walls, discover hidden treasures, and fill my hands with them. Palaces arise at my nod, and my architect makes no mistakes. I can make all lands break forth into blossom, help up their gold and precious stones, and surround myself with fair women and ever new faces; everything is yielded up to my will. I could gamble on the Stock Exchange, and my speculations would be infallible; but a man who can find the hoards that misers have hidden in the earth need not trouble himself about stocks. Feel the strength of the hand that grasps you; poor

wretch, doomed to shame! Try to bend the arm of iron! try to soften the adamantine heart! Fly from me if you dare! You would hear my voice in the depths of the caves that lie under the Seine; you might hide in the Catacombs, but would you not see me there? My voice could be heard through the sound of the thunder, my eyes shine as brightly as the sun, for I am the peer of Lucifer!"

Castanier heard the terrible words, and felt no protest nor contradiction within himself. He walked side by side with the Englishman, and had no power to leave him.

"You are mine; you have just committed a crime. I have found at last the mate whom I have sought. Have you a mind to learn your destiny! Aha! you came here to see a play, and you shall see a play—nay, two Come. Present me to Mme. de la Garde as one of your best friends. Am I not your last hope of escape?"

Castanier, followed by the stranger, returned to his box; and in accordance with the order he had just received, he hastened to introduce Melmoth to Mme. de la Garde. Anquilina seemed to be not in the least surprised. The Englishman declined to take a seat in front, and Castanier was once more beside his mistress; the man's slightest wish must be obeyed. The last piece was about to begin, for, at that time, small theaters only gave three pieces. One of the actors had made the Gymnase the fashion, and that evening Perlet (the actor in question) was to play in a vaudeville called the *Le Comédien d'Étampes,* in which he filled four different parts.

When the curtain rose, the stranger stretched out his hand over the crowded house. Castainer's crey of terror died away, for the walls of his throat seemed glued together as Melmoth pointed to the stage, and the cashier knew that the play had been changed at the Englishman's desire.

He saw the strong-room at the bank; he saw the Baron de Nucingen in conference with a police officer from the Prefecture, who was informing him of Castanier's conduct, explaining that the cashier had absconded with money taken from the safe, giving the history of the forged signature. The information was put in writing; the document signed and duly dispatched to the Public Prosecutor.

"Are we in time, do you think?" asked Nucingen.

"Yes," said the agent of police; "he is at the Gymnase, and has no suspicion of anything."

Castanier fidgeted on his chair, and made as if he would leave the theater, but Melmoth's hand lay on his shoulder, and he was obliged to sit and watch; the hideous power of the man produced an effect like that of nightmare, and he could not move a limb. Nay, the man himself was the nightmare; his presence weighed heavily on his victim like a poisoned atmosphere. When the wretched cashier turned to implore the Englishman's mercy, he met those blazing eyes that discharged electric currents, which pierced through him and transfixed him like darts of steel.

"What have I done to you?" he said, in his prostrate helplessness, and he breathed hard like a stag at the water's edge. "What do you want of me?"

"Look!" cried Melmoth.

Castanier looked at the stage. The scene had been changed. The play seemed to be over, and Castanier beheld himself stepping from the carriage with Aquilina; but as he entered the courtyard of the house in the Rue Richer, the scene again was suddenly changed, and he saw his own house. Jenny was chatting by the fire in her mistress's room with a subaltern officer of a line regiment then stationed in Paris.

"He is going, is he?" said the sergeant, who seemed to belong to a family in easy circumstances; "I can be happy at my ease! I love Aquilina too well to allow her to belong to that old toad! I, myself, am going to marry Mme. de la Garde!" cried the sergeant.

"Old toad!" Castanier murmured piteously.

"Here come the master and mistress; hide yourself! Stay, get in here, M. Léon," said Jenny. "The master won't stay here for very long."

Castanier watched the sergeant hide himself among Aquilina's gowns in her dressing-room. Almost immediately he himself appeared upon the scene, and took leave of his mistress, who made fun of him in "asides" to Jenny, while she uttered the sweetest and tenderest words in his ears. She wept with one side of her face, and laughed with the other. The audience called for an encore.

"Accursed creature!" cried Castanier from his box.

Aquilina was laughing till the tears came into her eyes.

"Goodness!" she cried, "how funny Perlet is as the Englishwoman! . . . Why don't you laugh? Everyone else in the house is laughing. Laugh, dear!" she said to Castanier.

Melmoth burst out laughing, and the unhappy cashier shuddered. The Englishman's laughter wrung his heart and tortured his brain; it was as if a surgeon had bored his skull with a red-hot iron.

"Laughing! are they laughing!" stammered Castanier.

He did not see the prim English lady whom Perlet was acting with such ludicrous effect, nor hear the English-French that had filled the house with roars of laughter; instead of all this, he beheld himself hurrying from the Rue Richer, hailing a cab on the boulevard, bargaining with the man to take him to Versailles. Then once more the scene changed. He recognized the sorry inn at the corner of the Rue de l'Orangerie and the Rue des Récollets, which was kept by his old quartermaster. It was two o'clock in the morning, the most perfect stillness prevailed, no one was there to watch his movements. The post-horses were put into the carriage (it came from a house in the Avenue de Paris in which an Englishman lived, and had been ordered in the foreigner's name to avoid raising suspicion). Castanier saw that he had his bills and his passports, stepped into the carriage, and set out. But at the barrier he saw two gendarmes lying in wait for the carriage. A cry of horror burst from him, but Melmoth gave him a glance, and again the sound died in his throat.

"Keep your eyes on the stage, and be quiet!" said the Englishman.

In another moment Castanier saw himself flung into prison at the Conciergerie; and in the fifth act of the drama, entitled *The Cashier*, he saw

himself, in three months' time, condemned to twenty years of penal servitude. Again a cry broke from him. He was exposed upon the Place du Palais-de-Justice, and the executioner branded him with a red-hot iron. Then came the last scene of all; among some sixty convicts in the prison yard of the Bicêtre, he was awaiting his turn to have the irons riveted on his limbs.

"Dear me! I cannot laugh any more! .. . ." said Aquilina. "You are very solemn, dear boy; what can be the matter? The gentleman has gone."

"A word with you, Castanier," said Melmoth when the piece was at an end, and the attendant was fastening Mme. de la Garde's cloak.

The corridor was crowded, and escape impossible.

"Very well, what is it?"

"No human power can hinder you from taking Aquilina home, and going next to Versailles, there to be arrested."

"How so?"

"Because you are in a hand that will never relax its grasp," returned the Englishman.

Castanier longed for the power to utter some word that should blot him out from among living men and hide him in the lowest depths of hell.

"Suppose that the Devil were to make a bid for your soul, would you not give it to him now in exchange for the power of God? One single word, and those five hundred thousand francs shall be back in the Baron de Nucingen's safe; then you can tear up your letter of credit, and all traces of your crime will be obliterated. Moreover, you would have gold in torrents. You hardly believe in anything perhaps? Well, if all this comes to pass, you will believe at least in the Devil."

"If it were only possible!" said Castanier joyfully.

"The man who can do it all gives you his word that it is possible," answered the Englishman.

Melmoth, Castanier, and Mme. de la Garde were standing out in the boulevard when Melmoth raised his arm. A drizzling rain was falling, the streets were muddy, the air was close, there was thick darkness overhead; but in a moment, as the arm was outstretched, Paris was filled with sunlight; it was high noon on a bright July day. The trees were covered with leaves; a double stream of joyous holiday makers strolled beneath them. Sellers of licorice water shouted their cool drinks. Splendid carriages rolled past along the streets. A cry of terror broke from the cashier, and at that cry rain and darkness once more settled down upon the boulevard.

Mme. de la Garde had stepped into the carriage. "Do be quick, dear!" she cried; "either come in or stay out. Really, you are as dull as ditch-water this evening——"

"What must I do?" Castanier asked of Melmoth.

"Would you like to take my place?" inquired the Englishman.

"Yes."

"Very well, then; I will be at your house in a few moments."

"By the by, Castanier, you are rather off your balance," Aquilina remarked. "There is some mischief brewing; you were quite melancholy and thoughtful all through the play. Do you want anything that I can give you, dear? Tell me."

"I am waiting till we are at home to know whether you love me."

"You need not wait till then," she said, throwing her arms round his neck. "There!" she said, as she embraced him, passionately to all appearance, and plied him with the coaxing caresses that are part of the business of such a life as hers, like stage action for an actress.

"Where is the music?" asked Castanier.

"What next? Only think of your hearing music now!"

"Heavenly music!" he went on. "The sounds seem to come from above."

"What? You have always refused to give me a box at the Italiens because you could not abide music, and are you turning music-mad at this time of day? Mad—that you are! The music is inside your own noddle, old addle-pate!" she went on, as she took his head in her hands and rocked it to and fro on her shoulder. "Tell me now, old man; isn't it the creaking of the wheels that sings in your ears?"

"Just listen, Naqui! If the angels make music for God Almighty, it must be such music as this that I am drinking in at every pore, rather than hearing. I do not know how to tell you about it; it is as sweet as honey-water!"

"Why, of course, they have music in heaven, for the angels in all the pictures have harps in their hands. He is mad, upon my word!" she said to herself, as she saw Castanier's attitude; he looked like an opium-eater in a blissful trance.

They reached the house. Castanier, absorbed by the thought of all that he had just heard and seen, knew not whether to believe it or no; he was like a drunken man, and utterly unable to think connectedly. He came to himself in Aquilina's room, whither he had been supported by the united efforts of his mistress, the porter, and Jenny; for he had fainted as he stepped from the carriage.

"*He* will be here directly! Oh, my friends, my friends!" he cried, and he flung himself despairingly into the depths of a low chair beside the fire.

Jenny heard the bell as he spoke, and admitted the Englishman. She announced that "a gentleman had come who had made an appointment with the master," when Melmoth suddenly appeared, and deep silence followed. He looked at the porter—the porter went; he looked at Jenny—and Jenny went likewise.

"Madame," said Melmoth, utrning to Aquilina, "with your permission, we will conclude a piece of urgent business."

He took Castanier's hand, and Castanier rose, and the two men went into the drawing-room. There was no light in the room, but Melmoth's eyes lit up the thickest darkness. The gaze of those strange eyes had left Aquilina like one spellbound; she was helpless, unable to take any thought for her lover; moreover, she believed him to be safe in Jenny's room, whereas their early return had taken the waiting-woman by surprise, and she had hidden the officer in the dressing-room. It had all happened exactly as in the drama that Melmoth had displayed for his victim. Presently the house door was slammed violently, and Castanier reappeared.

"What ails you?" cried the horror-struck Aquilina.

There was a change in the cashier's

appearance. A strange pallor overspread his once rubicund countenance; it wore the peculiarly sinsiter and stony look of the mysterious visitor. The sullen glare of his eyes was intolerable, the fierce light in them seemed to scorch. The man who had looked so good-humored and good-natured had suddenly grown tyrannical and proud. The courtesan thought that Castanier had grown thinner; there was a terrible majesty in his brow; it was as if a dragon breathed forth a malignant influence that weighed upon the others like a close, heavy atmosphere. For a moment Aquilina knew not what to do.

"What passed between you and that diabolical-looking man in those few minutes?" she asked at length.

"I have sold my soul to him. I feel it; I am no longer the same. He has taken my *self*, and given me his soul in exchange."

"What?"

"You would not understand it at all. . . . Ah! he was right," Castanier went on, "the fiend was right! I see everything and know all things.—You have been deceiving me!"

Aquilina turned cold with terror. Castanier lighted a candle and went into the dressing-room. The unhappy girl followed him in dazed bewilderment, and great was her astonishment when Castanier drew the dresses that hung there aside and disclosed the sergeant.

"Come out, my boy," said the cashier; and, taking Léon by a button of his overcoat, he drew the officer into his room.

The Piedmontese, haggard and desperate, had flung herself into her easy-chair. Castanier seated himself on a sofa by the fire, and left Aquilina's lover in a standing position.

"You have been in the army," said Léon; "I am ready to give you satisfaction."

"You are a fool," said Castanier dryly. "I have no occasion to fight. I could kill you by a look if I had any mind to do it. I will tell you what it is, youngster; why should I kill you? I can see a red line round your neck—the guillotine is waiting for you. Yes, you will end in the Place de Grève. You are the headsman's property! there is no escape for you. You belong to a *vendita* of the Carbonari. You are plotting against the Government."

"You did not tell me that," cried the Piedmontese, turning to Léon.

"So you do not know that the Minister decided this morning to put down your Society?" the cashier continued. The Procureur-Général has a list of your names. You have been betrayed. They are busy drawing up the indictment at this moment."

"Then was it you who betrayed him?" cried Aquilina, and with a hoarse sound in her throat like the growl of a tigress she rose to her feet; she seemed as if she would tear Castanier in pieces.

"You know me too well to believe it," Castanier retorted. Aquilina was benumbed by his coolness.

"Then how did you know it?" she murmured.

"I did not know it until I went into the drawing-room; now I know it—now I see and knew all things, and can do all things."

The sergeant was overcome with amazement.

"Very well then, save him, save him.

dear!" cried the girl, flinging herself at Castanier's feet. "If nothing is impossible to you, save him! I will love you, I will adore you, I will be your slave and not your mistress. I will obey your wildest whims; you shall do as you will with me. Yes, yes, I will give you more than love; you shall have a daughter's devotion as well as . . . Rodolphe! why will you not understand! After all, however violent my passions may be, I shall be yours forever! What should I say to persuade you? I will invent pleasures . . . I . . . Great heavens! one moment! whatever you shall ask of me—to fling myself from the window, for instance—you will need to say but one word, 'Léon!' and I will plunge down into hell. I would bear any torture, any pain of body or soul, anything you might inflict upon me!"

Castanier heard her with indifference. For all answer, he indicated Léon to her with a fiendish laugh.

"The guillotine is waiting for him," he repeated.

"No, no, no! He shall not leave this house. I will save him!" she cried. "Yes; I will kill anyone who lays a finger upon him! Why will you not save him?" she shrieked aloud; her eyes were blazing, her hair unbound. "Can you save him?"

"I can do everything."

"Why do you not save him?"

"Why?" shouted Castanier, and his voice made the ceiling ring.—"Eh! it is my revenge! Doing evil is my trade!"

"Die?" said Aquilina; "must he die, my lover? Is it possible?"

She sprang up and snatched a stiletto from a basket that stood on the chest of drawers and went to Castanier, who began to laugh.

"You know very well that stell cannot hurt me now——"

Aquilina's arm suddenly dropped like a snapped harp string.

"Out with you, my good friend," said the cashier, turning to the sergeant, "and go about your business."

He held out his hand; the other felt Castanier's superior power, and could not choose but obey.

"This house is mine; I could send for the commissary of police if I chose, and give you up as a man who has hidden himself on my premises, but I would rather let you go; I am a fiend, I am not a spy."

"I shall follow him!" said Aquilina.

"Then follow him," returned Castanier.—"Here, Jenny——"

Jenny appeared.

"Tell the porter to hail a cab for them.—Here, Naqui," said Castanier, drawing a bundle of bank-notes from his pocket! "you shall not go away like a pauper from a man who loves you still."

He held out three hundred thousand francs. Aquilina took the notes, flung them on the floor, spat on them, and trampled upon them in a frenzy of despair.

"We will leave this house on foot," she cried, "without a farthing of your money.—Jenny, stay where you are."

"Good-evening!" answered the cashier, as he gathered up the notes again. "I have come back from my journey.—Jenny," he added, looking at the bewildered waiting-maid, "you seem to me to be a good sort of girl. You have no

mistress now. Come here. This evening you shall have a master."

Aquilina, who felt safe nowhere, went at once with the sergeant to the house of one of her friends. But all Léon's movements were suspiciously watched by the police, and after a time he and three of his friends were arrested. The whole story may be found in the newspapers of that day.

Castanier felt that he had undergone a mental as well as a physical transformation. The Castanier of old no longer existed—the boy, the young Lothario, the soldier who had proved his courage, who had been tricked into a marriage and disillusioned, the cashier, the passionate lover who had committed a crime for Aquilina's sake. His inmost nature had suddenly asserted itself. His brain had expanded, his senses had developed. His thoughts comprehended the whole world; he saw all the things of earth as if he had been raised to some high pinnacle above the world.

Until that evening at the play he had loved Aquilina to distraction. Rather than give her up he would have shut his eyes to her infidelities; and now all that blind passion had passed away as a cloud vanishes in the sunlight.

Jenny was delighted to succeed to her mistress's position and fortune, and did the cashier's will in all things; but Castanier, who could read the inmost thoughts of the soul, discovered the real motive underlying this purely physical devotion. He amused himself with her, however, like a mischievous child who greedily sucks the juice of the cherry and flings away the stone. The next morning at breakfast time, when she was fully convinced that she was a lady and the mistress of the house, Castanier uttered one by one the thoughts that filled her mind as she drank her coffee.

"Do you know what you are thinking, child?" he said, smiling. "I will tell you: 'So all that lovely rosewood furniture that I coveted so much, and the pretty dresses that I used to try on, are mine now! All on easy terms that madame refused, I do not know why. My word! if I might drive about in a carriage, have jewels and pretty things, a box at the theater, and put something by! with me he should lead a life of pleasure fit to kill him if he were not as strong as a Turk! I never saw such a man!'—Was not that just what you were thinking," he went on, and something in his voice made Jenny turn pale. "Well, yes, child; you could not stand it, and I am sending you away for your own good; you would perish in the attempt. Come, let us part good friends," and he coolly dismissed her with a very small sum of money.

The first use that Castanier had promised himself that he would make of the terrible power bought at the price of his eternal happiness, was the full and complete indulgence of all his tastes.

He first put his affairs in order, readily settled his account with M. de Nucingen, who found a worthy German to succeed him, and then determined on a carouse worthy of the palmiest days of the Roman Empire. He plunged into dissipation as recklessly as Belshazzar of old went to that last feast in Babylon. Like Belshazzar, he saw clearly through his revels a gleaming hand that traced his doom in letters of flame, not on

the narrow walls of the banqueting-chamber, but over the vast spaces of heaven that the rainbow spans. His feast was not, indeed, an orgy confined within the limits of a banquent, for he squandered all the powers of soul and body in exhausting all the pleasures of earth. The table was in some sort earth itself, the earth that trembled beneath his feet. His was the last festival of the reckless spendthrift who has thrown all prudence to the winds. The Devil had given him the key of the storehouse of human pleasures; he had filled and refilled his hands, and he was fast nearing the bottom. In a moment he had felt all that enormous power could accomplish; in a moment he had exercised it, proved it, wearied of it. What had hitherto been the sum of human desires became as nothing. So often it happens that with possession the vast poetry of desire must end, and the thing possessed is seldom the thing that we dreamed of.

Beneath Melmoth's omnipotence lurked this tragical anti-climax of so many a passion, and now the inanity of human nature was revealed to his successor, to whom infinite power brought Nothingness as a dowry.

To come to a clear understanding of Castanier's strange position, it must be borne in mind how suddenly these revolutions of thought and feeling had been wrought; how quickly they had succeeded each other; and of these things it is hard to give any idea to those who have never broken the prison bonds of time, and space, and distance. His relation to the world without had been entirely changed with the expansion of his faculties.

Like Melmoth himself, Castanier could travel in a few moments over the fertile plains of India, could soar on the wings of demons above African desert spaces, or skim the surface of the seas. The same insight that could read the inmost thoughts of others, could apprehend at a glance the nature of any material object, just as he caught as it were all flavors at once upon his tongue. He took his pleasure like a despot; a blow of the ax felled the tree that he might eat its fruits. The transitions, the alternations that measure joy and pain, and diversify human happiness, no longer existed for him. He had so completely glutted his appetites that pleasure must overpass the limits of pleasure to tickle a palate cloyed with satiety, and suddenly grown fastidious beyond all measure, so that ordinary pleasures became distasteful. Conscious that at will he was the maste of all the women that he could desire, knowing that his power was irresistible, he did not care to exercise it; they were pliant to his unexpressed wishes, to his most extravagant caprices, until he felt a horrible thirst for love, and would have love beyond their power to give.

The world refused him nothing save faith and prayer, the soothing and consoling love that is not of this world. He was obeyed—it was a horrible position.

The torrents of pain, and pleasure, and thought that shook his soul and his bodily frame would have overwhelmed the strongest human being; but in him there was a power of vitality proportioned to the power of the sensations that assailed him. He felt within him a vagaue immensity of longing that

earth could not satisfy. He spent his days on outspread wings, longing to traverse the luminous fields of space to other spheres that he knew afar by intuitive perception, a clear and hopeless knowledge. His soul dried up within him, for he hungered and thirsted after things that can neither be drunk nor eaten, but for which he could not choose but crave. His lips, like Melmoth's, burned with desire; he panted for the unknown, for he knew all things.

The mechanism and the scheme of the world was apparent to him, and its working interested him no longer; he did not long disguise the profound scorn that makes of a man of extraordinary powers a sphinx who knows eveything and says nothing, and sees all things with an unmoved countenance. He felt not the slightest wish to communicate his knowledge to other men. He was rich with all the wealth of the world, with one effort he could make the circle of the globe, and riches and power were meaningless for him. He felt the awful melancholy of omnipotence, a melancholy which Satan and God relieve by the exercise of infinite power in mysterious ways known to them alone. Castanier had not, like his Master, the inextinguishable energy of hate and malice; he felt that he was a devil, but a devil whose time was not yet come, while Satan is a devil through all eternity, and being damned beyond redemption, delights to stir up the world, like a dung heap, with his triple fork and to thwart therein the designs of God. But Castanier, for his misfortune, had one hope left.

If in a moment he could move from one pole to the other as a bird springs restlessly from side to side in its cage, when, like the bird, he had crossed his prison, he saw the vast immensity of space beyond it. That vision of the Infinite left him forever unable to see humanity and its affairs as other men saw them. The insensate fools who long for the power of the Devil gauge its desirability from a human standpoint; they do not see that with the Devil's power they will likewise assume his thoughts, and that they will be doomed to remain as men among creatures who will no longer understand them. The Nero unknown to history who dreams of setting Paris on fire for his private entertainment, like an exhibition of a burning house on the boards of a theater, does not suspect that if he had that power, Paris would become for him as little interesting as an ant-heap by the roadside to a hurrying passer-by. The circle of the sciences was for Castanier something like a logogriph for a man who does not know the key to it. Kings and governments were despicable in his eyes. His great debauch had been in some sort a deplorable farewell to his life as a man. The earth had grown too narrow for him, for the infernal gifts laid bare for him the secrets of creation—he saw the cause and foresaw its end. He was shut out from all that men call "heaven" in all languages under the sun; he could no longer think of heaven.

Then he came to understand the look on his predecessor's face and the drying up of the life within; then he knew all that was meant by the baffled hope that gleamed in Melmoth's eyes; he, too, knew the thirst that burned those red lips, and the agony of a continual

struggle between two natures grown to giant size. Even yet he might be an angel, and he knew himself to be a fiend. His was the fate of a sweet and gentle creature that a wizard's malice has imprisoned in a misshapen form, entrapping it by a pact, so that another's will must set it free from its detested envelope.

As a deception only increases the ardor with which a man of really great nature explores the infinate of sentiment in a woman's heart, so Castanier awoke to find that one idea lay like a weight upon his soul, an idea which was perhaps the key to loftier spheres. The very fact that he had bartered away his eternal happiness led him to dwell in thought upon the future of those who pray and believe. On the morrow of his debauch, when he entered into the sober possession of his power, this idea made him feel himself a prisoner; he knew the burden of the woe that poets, and prophets, and great oracles of faith have set forth for us in such mighty words; he felt the point of the Flaming Sword plunged into his side, and hurried in search of Melmoth. What had become of his predecessor?

The Englishman was living in a mansion in the Rue Férou, near Saint-Sulpice—a gloomy, dark, damp, and cold abode. The Rue Férou itself is one of the most dismal streets in Paris; it has a north aspect like all the streets that lie at right angles to the left bank of the Seine, and the houses are in keeping with the site. As Castanier stood on the threshold he found that the door itself, like the vaulted roof, was hung with black; rows of lighted tapers shone brilliantly as though some king were lying in state; and a priest stood on either side of a catafalque that had been raised there.

"There is no need to ask why you have come, sir," the old hall porter said to Castanier; "you are so like our poor dear master that is gone. But if you are his brother, you have come too late to bid him good-by. The good gentleman died the night before last."

"How did he die?" Castanier asked of one of the priests.

"Set your mind at rest," said an old priest; he partly raised as he spoke the black pall that covered the catafalque.

Castanier, looking at him, saw one of those faces that faith has made sublime; the soul seemed to shine forth from every line of it, bringing light and warmth for other men, kindled by the unfailing charity within. This was Sir John Melmoth's confessor.

"Your brother made an end that men may envy, and that must rejoice the angels. Do you know what joy there is in heaven over a sinner that repents? His tears of penitence, excited by grace, flowed without ceasing; death alone checked them. The Holy Spirit dwelt in him. His burning words, full of lively faith, were worthy of the Prophet-King. If, in the course of my life, I have never heard a more dreadful confession than from the lips of this Irish gentleman, I have likewise never heard such fervent and passionate prayers. However great the measures of his sins may have been, his repentance has filled the abyss to overflowing. The hand of God was visibly stretched out above him, for he was completely changed, there was such heavenly beauty in his face. The hard eyes were softened by tears; the res-

enant voice that struck terror into those who heard it took the tender and compassionate tones of those who themselves have passed through deep humiliation. He so edified those who heard his words, that some who had felt drawn to see the spectacle of a Christian's death fell on their knees as he spoke of heavenly things, and of the infinite glory of God, and gave thanks and praise to Him. If he is leaving no wordly wealth to his family, no family can possess a greater blessing than this that he surely gained for them, a soul among the blessed, who will watch over you all and direct you in the path to heaven."

These words made such a vivid impression upon Castanier that he instantly hurried from the house to the Church of Saint-Sulpice, obeying what might be called a decree of fate. Melmoth's repentance had stupefied him.

At that time, on certain mornings in the week, a preacher, famed for his eloquence, was wont to hold conferences, in the course of which he demonstrated the truths of the Catholic faith for the youth of a generation proclaimed to be indifferent in matters of belief by another voice no less eloquent than his own. The conference had been put off to a later hour on account of Melmoth's funeral, so Castanier arrived just as the great preacher was epitomizing the proofs of a future existence of happiness with all the charm of eloquence and force of expression which have made him famous. The seeds of divine doctrine fell into a soil prepared for them in the old dragoon, into whom the Devil had glided. Indeed, if there is a phenomenon well attested by experience, is it not the spiritual phenomenon commonly called "the faith of the peasant"? The strength of belief varies inversely with the amount of use that a man has made of his reasoning faculties. Simple people and soldiers belong to the unreasoning class. Those who have marched through life beneath the banner of instinct are far more ready to receive the light than minds and hearts overwearied with the world's sophistries.

Castanier had the Southern temperament; he had joined the army as a lad of sixteen, and had followed the French flag till he was nearly forty years old. As a common trooper, he had fought day and night, and day after day, and, as in duty bound, had thought of his horse first, and of himself afterwards. While he served his military apprenticeship, therefore, he had but little leisure in which to reflect on the destiny of man, and when he became an officer he had his men to think of. He had been swept from battlefield to battlefield, but he had never thought of what comes after death. A soldier's life does not demand much thinking. Those who cannot understand the lofty political ends involved and the interests of nation and nation; who cannot grasp political schemes as well as plans of campaign, and combine the science of the tactician with that of the administrator, are bound to live in a state of ignorance; the most boorish peasant in the most backward district in France is scarcely in a worse case. Such men as these bear the brunt of war, yield passive obedience to the brain that directs them, and strike down the men opposed to them as the woodcutter fells timber in the forest. Violent physical exertion

is succeeded by times of inertia, when they repair the waste. They fight and drink. fight and eat, fight and sleep, that they may the better deal hard blows; the powers of the mind are not greatly exercised in this turbulent round of existence, and the character is as simple as heretofore.

When the men who have shown such energy on the battlefield return to ordinary civilization, most of those who have not risen to high rank seem to have acquired no ideas, and to have no aptitude, no capacity, for grasping new ideas. To the utter amazement of a younger generation, those who made our armies so glorious and so terrible are as simple as children, and as slow-witted as a clerk at his worst, and the captain of a thundering squadron is scarcely fit to keep a merchant's day-book. Old soldiers of this stamp, therefore, being innocent of any attempt to use their reasoning faculties, act upon their strongest impulses. Castainer's crime was one of those matters that raise so many questions, that, in order to debate about it, a moralist might call for its "discussion by clauses," to make use of a parliamentary expression.

Passion had counseled the crime; the cruelly irresistible power of feminine witchery had driven him to commit it; no man can say of himself, "I will never do that," when a siren joins in the combat and throws her spells over him.

So the word of life fell upon a conscience newly awakened to the truths of religion which the French Revolution and a soldier's career had forced Castanier to neglect. The solemn words, "You will be happy or miserable for all eternity!" made but the more terrible impression upon him, because he had exhausted earth and shaken it like a barren tree; because his desires could effect all things, so that it was enough that any spot in earth or heaven should be forbidden him, and he forthwith thought of nothing else. If it were allowable to compare such great things with social follies, Castanier's position was not unlike that of a banker who, finding that his all-powerful millions cannot obtain for him an entrance into the society of the noblesse, must set his heart upon entering that circle, and all the social privileges that he has already acquired are as nothing in his eyes from the moment when he discovers thtat a single one is lacking.

Here was a man more powerful than all the kings on earth put together; a man who, like Satan, could wrestle with God Himself; leaning against one of the pillars in the Church of Saint-Sulpice, weighed down by the feelings and thoughts that oppressed him, and absorbed in the thought of a Future, the same thought that had engulfed Melmoth.

"He was very happy, was Melmoth!" cried Castanier. "He died in the certain knowledge that he would go to heaven."

In a moment the greatest possible change had been wrought in the cashier's ideas. For several days he had been a devil, now he was nothing but a man; an image of the fallen Adam, of the sacred tradition embodied in all cosmogonies. But while he had thus shrunk to man, he retained a germ of greatness, he had been steeped in the

Infinite. The power of Hell had revealed the divine power. He thirsted for heaven as he had never thirsted after the pleasures of earth, that are so soon exhausted. The enjoyments which the fiend promises are but the enjoyments of earth on a larger scale, but to the joys of heaven there is no limit. He believed in God, and the spell that gave him the treasures of the world was as nothing to him now; the treasures themselves seemed to him as contemptible as pebbles to an admirer of diamonds; they were but gewgaws compared with the eternal glories of the other life. A curse lay, he thought, on all things that came to him from this source. He sounded dark depths of painful thought as he listened to the service performed for Melmoth. The *Dies iræ* filled him with awe; he felt all the grandeur of that cry of a repentant soul trembling before the Throne of God. The Holy Spirit, like a devouring flame, passed through him as fire consumes straw.

The tears were falling from his eyes when—"Are you a relation of the dead?" the beadle asked him.

"I am his heir," Castanier answered.

Give something for the expenses of the services!" cried the man.

"No," said the cashier. (The Devil's money should not go to the Church.)

"For the poor!"

"No."

"For repairing the Church!"

"No."

"The Lady Chapel!"

"No."

"For the schools!'

"No."

Castanier went, not caring to expose himself to the sour looks that the irritated functionaries gave him.

Outside, in the street, he looked up at the Church of Saint-Sulpice. "What made people build the giant cathedrals I have seen in every country?" he asked himself. "The feeling shared so widely throughout all time must surely be based upon something."

"Something! Do you call God *something?*" cried his conscience. "God! God! God! . . ."

The word was echoed and re-echoed by an inner voice, till it overwhelmed him; but his feeling of terror subsided as he heard sweet distant sounds of music that he had caught faintly before. They were singing in the church, he thought, and his eyes scanned the great doorway. But as he listened more closely, the sounds poured upon him from all sides; he looked round the square, but there was no sign of any musicians. The melody brought visions of a distant heaven and far-off gleams of hope; but it also quickened the remorse that had set the lost soul in a ferment. He went on his way through Paris, walking as men walk who are crushed beneath the burden of their sorrow, seeing everything with unseeing eyes, loitering like an idler, stopping without cause, muttering to himself, careless of the traffic, making no effort to avoid a blow from a plank of timber.

Imperceptibly repentance brought him under the influence of the divine grace that soothes while it bruises the heart so terribly. His face came to wear a look of Melmoth, something great, with a trace of madness in the greatness. A look of dull and hopeless distress, mingled with the excited eagerness of hope, and, beneath it all, a gnawing

sense of loathing for all that the world can give. The humblest of prayers lurked in the eyes that saw with such dreadful clearness. His power was the measure of his anguish. His body was bowed down by the feaful storm that shook his soul, as the tall pines bend before the blast. Like his predecessor, he could not refuse to bear the burden of life; he was afraid to die while he bore the yoke of Hell. The torment grew intolerable.

At last, one morning, he bethought himself how that Melmoth (now among the blessed) had made the proposal of an exchange, and how that he had accepted it; others, doubtless, would follow his example; for in an age proclaimed, by the inheritors of the eloquence of the Fathers of the Church, to be fatally indifferent to religion, it should be easy to find a man who would accept the conditions of the contract in order to prove its advantages.

"There is one place where you can learn what kings will fetch in the market; where nations are weighed in the balance and systems appraised; where the value of a government is stated in terms of the five-franc piece; where ideas and beliefs have their price, and everything is discounted; where God Himself, in a manner, borrows on the security of His revenue of souls, for the Pope has a running account there. Is it not there that I should go to traffic in souls?"

Castanier went quite joyously on 'Change, thinking that it would be as easy to buy a soul as to invest money in the Funds. Any ordinary person would have feared ridicule, but Castanier knew by experience that a desperate man takes everything seriously. A prisoner lying under sentence of death would listen to the madman who should tell him that by pronouncing some gibberish he could escape through the keyhole; for suffering is credulous, and clings to an idea until it fails, as the swimmer borne along by the current clings to the branch that snaps in his hand.

Towards four o'clock that afternoon Castanier appeared among the little knots of men who were transacting private business after 'Change. He was personally known to some of the brokers; and while affecting to be in search of an acquaintance, he managed to pick up the current gossip and rumors of failure.

"Catch me negotiating bills for Claparon & Co., my boy. The bank collector went round to return their acceptances to them this morning," said a fat banker in his outspoken way. "If you have any of their paper, look out."

Claparon was in the building, in deep consultation with a man well known for the ruinous rate at which he lent money. Castanier went forthwith in search of the said Claparon, a merchant who had a reputation for taking heavy risks that meant wealth or utter ruin. The moneylender walked away as Castanier came up. A gesture betrayed the speculator's despair.

"Well, Claparon, the Bank wants a hundred thousand francs of you, and it is four o'clock; the thing is known, and it is too late to arrange your little failure comfortably," said Castanier.

"Sir!"

"Speak lower," the cashier went on. "How if I were to propose a piece of

business that would bring you in as much money as you require?"

"It would not discharge my liabilities; every business that I ever heard of wants a little time to simmer in."

"I know of something that will set you straight in a moment," answered Castanier; "but first you would have to——"

"Do what?"

"Sell your share of Paradise. It is a matter of business like anything else, isn't it? We all hold shares in the great Speculation of Eternity."

"I tell you this," said Claparon angrily, "that I am just the man to lend you a slap in the face. When a man is in trouble, it is no time to play silly jokes on him."

"I am talking seriously," said Castanier, and he drew a bundle of notes from his pocket.

"In the first place," said Claparon, "I am not going to sell my soul to the Devil for a trifle. I want five hundred thousand francs before I strike——"

"Who talks of stinting you?" asked Castanier, cutting him short. "You should have more gold than you could stow in the cellars of the Bank of France."

He held out a handful of notes. That decided Claparon.

"Done," he cried; "but how is the bargain to be made?"

"Let us go over yonder, no one is standing there," said Castanier, pointing to a corner of the court.

Claparon and his tempter exchanged a few words, with their faces turned to the wall. None of the onlookers guessed the nature of this by-play, though their curiosity was keenly excited by the strange gestures of the two contracting parties. When Castanier returned, there was a sudden outburst of amazed exclamation. As in the Assembly where the least event immediately attracts attention, all faces were turned to the two men who had caused the sensation, and a shiver passed through all beholders at the change that had taken place in them.

The men who form the moving crowd that fills the Stock Exchange are soon known to each other by sight. They watch each other like players round a card table. Some shrewd observers can tell how a man will play and the condition of his exchequer from a survey of his face; and the Stock Exchange is simply a vast card table. Everyone, therefore, had noticed Claparon and Castanier. The latter (like the Irishman before him) had been muscular and powerful, his eyes were full of light, his color high. The dignity and power in his face had struck awe into them all; they wondered how old Castainer had come by it; and now they beheld Castanier divested of his power, shrunken, wrinkled, aged, and feeble. He had drawn Claparon out of the crowd with the energy of a sick man in a fever fit; he had looked like an opium-eater during the brief period of excitement that the drug can give; now, on his return, he seemed to be in the condition of utter exhaustion in which the patient dies after the fever departs, or to be suffering from the horrible prostration that follows on excessive indulgence in the delights of narcotics. The infernal power that had upheld him through his debauches had left him, and the body was left unaided and

alone to endure the agony of remorse and the heavy burden of sincere repentance. Claparon's troubles everyone could guess; but Claparon reappeared, on the other hand, with sparkling eyes, holding his head high with the pride of Lucifer. The crisis had passed from the one man to the other.

"Now you can drop off with an easy mind, old man," said Claparon to Castanier.

"For pity's sake, send for a cab and for a priest; send for the curate of Saint-Sulpice!" answered the old dragoon, sinking down upon the curbstone.

The words "a priest" reached the ears of several people, and produced uproarious jeering among the stockbrokers, for faith with these gentlemen means a belief that a scrap of paper called a mortgage represents an estate, and the List of Fundholders is their Bible.

"Shall I have time to repent?" said Castanier to himself, in a piteous voice, that impressed Claparon.

A cab carried away the dying man; the speculator went to the bank at once to meet his bills; and the momentary sensation produced upon the throng of business men by the sudden change on the two faces, vanished like the furrow cut by a ship's keel in the sea. News of the greatest importance kept the attention of the world of commerce on the alert; and when commercial interests are at stake, Moses might appear with his two luminous horns, and his coming would scarcely receive the honors of a pun; the gentlemen whose business it is to write the Market Reports would ignore his existence.

When Claparon had made his payments, fear seized upon him. There was no mistake about his power. He went on 'Change again, and offered his bargain to other men in embarrassed circumstances. The Devil's bond, "together with the rights, easements, and privileges appertaining thereunto,"—to use the expression of the notary who succeeded Claparon, changed hands for the sum of seven hundred thousand francs. The notary in his turn parted with the agreement with the Devil for five hundred thousand francs to a building contractor in difficulties, who likewise was rid of it to an iron merchant in consideration of a hundred thousand crowns. In fact, by five o'clock people had ceased to believe in the strange contract, and purchasers were lacking for want of confidence.

At half-past five the holder of the bond was a house-painter, who was lounging by the door of the building in the Rue Feydeau, where at that time stockbrokers temporarily congregated. The house-painter, simple fellow, could not think what was the matter with him. He "felt all anyhow"; so he told his wife when he went home.

The Rue Feydeau, as idlers about town are aware, is a place of pilgrimage for youths who for lack of a mistress bestow their ardent affection upon the whole sex. On the first floor of the most rigidly respectable domicile therein dwelt one of those exquisite creatures whom it has pleased Heaven to endow with the rarest and most surpassing beauty. As it is impossible that they should all be duchesses or queens (since there are many more pretty women in the world than titles and thrones for them to adorn), they are content to make a stockbroker or a banker happy

at a fixed price. To this good-natured beauty, Euphrasia by name, an unbounded ambition had led a notary's clerk to aspire. In short, the second clerk in the office of Maître Crottat, notary, had fallen in love with her, as youth at two-and-twenty can fall in love. The scrivener would have murdered the Pope and run amuck through the whole sacred college to procure the miserable sum of a hundred louis to pay for a shawl which had turned Euphrasia's head, at which price her waiting-woman had promised that Euphrasia should be his. The infatuated youth walked to and fro under Mme. Euphrasia's windows, like the polar bears in their cage at the Jardin des Plantes, with his right hand thrust beneath his waistcoat in the region of the heart, which he was fit to tear from his bosom, but as yet he had only wrenched at the elastic of his braces.

"What can one do to raise ten thousand francs?" he asked himself. "Shall I make off with the money that I must pay on the registration of that conveyance? Good Heavens! my loan would not ruin the purchaser, a man with seven millions! And then next day I would fling myself at his feet and say, 'I have taken ten thousand francs belonging to you, sir; I am twenty-two years of age, and I am in love with Euphrasia—that is my story. My father is rich, he will pay you back; do not ruin me! Have not you yourself been twenty-two years old and madly in love?' But these beggarly landowners have no souls! He would be quite likely to give me up to the public prosecutor, instead of taking pity upon me. Good God! if it were only possible to sell your soul to the Devil! But there is neither a God nor a Devil; it is all nonsense out of nursery tales and old wives' talk. What shall I do?"

"If you have a mind to sell your soul to the Devil, sir," said the house-painter, who had overheard something that the clerk let fall, "you can have the ten thousand francs."

"And Euphrasia!" cried the clerk, as he struck a bargain with the Devil that inhabited the house-painter.

The pact concluded, the frantic clerk went to find the shawl, and mounted Mme. Euphrasia's staircase; and as (literally) the Devil was in him, he did not come down for twelve days, drowning the thought of hell and of his privileges in twelve days of love and riot and forgetfulness, for which he had bartered away all his hopes of a paradise to come.

And in this way the secret of the vast power discovered and acquired by the Irishman, the offspring of Mathurin's brain, was lost to mankind; and the various Orientalists, Mystics, and Archæologists who take an interest in these matters were unable to hand down to posterity the proper method of invoking the Devil, for the following sufficient reasons:

On the thirteenth day after these frenzied nuptials the wretched clerk lay on a pallet bed in a garret in his master's house in the Rue Saint-Honoré. Shame, the stupid goddess who dares not behold herself, had taken possession of the young man. He had fallen ill; he would nurse himself; misjudged the quantity of a remedy devised by the skill of a practitioner well known on the walls of Paris, and succumbed to the effects of an overdose of mercury. His

corpse was as black as a mole's back. A devil had left unmistakable traces of its passage there; could it have been Ashtaroth?

"The estimable youth to whom you refer has been carried away to the planet Mercury," said the head clerk to a German demonologist who came to investigate the matter at first hand.

"I am quite prepared to believe it," answered the Teuton.

"Oh!"

"Yes, sir," returned the other. "The opinion you advance coincides with the very words of Jacob Boehme. In the forty-eighth proposition of *The Threefold Life of Man* he says that 'if God hath brought all things to pass with a LET THERE BE, the FIAT is the secret matrix which comprehends and apprehends the nature which is formed by the spirit born of Mercury and of God.'"

"What do you say, sir?"

The German delivered his quotation afresh.

"We do not know it," said the clerks.

"Fiat? . . ." said the clerk. *"Fiat lux!"*

"You can verify the citation for yourselves," said the German. "You will find the passage in the *Treatise of the Threefold Life of Man,* page 75; the edition was published by M. Migneret in 1809. It was translated into French by a philosopher who had a great admiration for the famous shoemaker."

"Oh! he was a shoemaker, was he?" said the head clerk.

"In Prussia," said the German.

"Did he work for the King of Prussia?" inquired a Bœotian of a second clerk.

"He must have vamped up his prose," said a third.

"That man is colossal!" cried the fourth, pointing to the Teuton.

That gentleman, though a demonologist of the first rank, did not know the amount of devilry to be found in a notary's clerk. He went away without the least idea that they were making game of him, and fully under the impression that the young fellows regarded Boehme as a colossal genius.

"Education is making strides in France," said he to himself.

The Maranas

To Mme. la Comtesse Merlin

IN spite of the discipline enforced by Marshal Suchet in the division he commanded in the Peninsular War, all his efforts could not restrain an outbreak of license and tumult at the taking of Taragona. Indeed, according to trustworthy military authorities, the intoxication of victory resulted in something very like a sack of the town. Pillage was promptly put down by the Marshal; and as soon as order was restored, a commandant appointed, the military administrators appeared upon the scene, and the town began to wear a nondescript aspect—the organization was French, but the Spanish population was left free to follow *in petto* its own national customs. It would be a task

of no little difficulty to determine the exact duration of the pillage, but its cause (like that of most sublunary events) is sufficiently easy to discover.

In the Marshal's division of the army there was a regiment composed almost entirely of Italians, commanded by a certain Colonel Eugène, a man of extraordinary valor, a second Murat, who, having come to the trade of war too late, had gained no Grand Duchy of Berg, no Kingdom of Naples, nor a ball through the heart at Pizzo. But if he had received no crown, his chances of receiving bullets were admirably good; and it would have been in no wise astonishing if he had had more than one of them. This regiment was made up from the wrecks of the Italian Legion, which is in Italy very much what the colonial battalions are in France. Stationed in the isle of Elba, it had provided an honorable way out of the difficulty experienced by families with regard to the future of unmanageable sons, as well as a career for those great men spoiled in the making, whom society is too ready to brand as *mauvais sujets.* All of them were men misunderstood, for the most part—men who may become heroes if a woman's smile raises them out of the beaten track of glory; or terrible after an orgy, when some ugly suggestion, dropped by a boon companion, has gained possession of their minds.

Napoleon had enrolled these men of energy in the Sixth Regiment of the line, hoping to metamorphose them into generals, with due allowance for the gaps to be made in their ranks by bullets; but the Emperor's estimate of the ravages of death proved more correct than the rest of his calculations. It was often decimated, but its character remained the same; and the Sixth acquired a name for splendid bravery in the field, and the very worst reputation in private life.

These Italians had lost their captain during the siege of Taragona. He was the famous Bianchi who laid a wager during the campaign that he would eat a Spanish sentinel's heart—and won his bet. The story of this pleasantry of the camp is told elsewhere in the *Scènes de la Vie Parisienne;* therein will be found certain details which corroborate what has been said here concerning the legion. Bianchi, the prince of those fiends incarnate who had earned the double reputation of the regiment, possessed the chivalrous sense of honor which, in the army, covers a multitude of the wildest excesses. In a word, had he lived a few centuries earlier, he would have made a gallant buccaneer. Only a few days before he fell, he had distinguished himself by such conspicuous courage in action that the Marshal sought to recognize it. Bianchi had refused promotion, pension, or a fresh decoration, and asked as a favor to be allowed to mount the first scaling-ladder at the assault of Taragona as his sole reward. The Marshal granted the request, and forgot his promise; but Bianchi himself put him in mind of it and of Bianchi, for the berserker captain was the first to plant the flag of France upon the wall; and there he fell, killed by a monk.

This historical digression is necessary to explain how it came to pass that the Sixth Regiment of the line was the first to enter Taragona, and how the tumult,

sufficiently natural after a town has been carried by storm, degenerated so quickly into an attempt to sack it. Moreover, among these men of iron, there were two officers, otherwise but little remarkable, who were destined by force of circumstances to play an important part in this story.

The first of these, a captain on the clothing establishment — half-civilian, half-officer—was generally said, in soldierly language, to "take good care of number one."

Outside his regiment he was wont to swagger and brag of his connection with it; he would curl his mustache and look a terrible fellow, but his mess had no great opinion of him. His money was the secret of his valorous discretion. For a double reason, moreover, he had been nicknamed *Captain of the Ravens;* because, in the first place, he scented the powder a league away; and, in the second, scurried out of range like a bird on the wing; the nickname was likewise a harmless soldier's joke, a personality of which another might have been proud. Captain Montefiore, of the illustrious family of the Montefiori of Milan (though by the law of the kingdom of Italy he might not bear his title), was one of the prettiest fellows in the army. Possibly his beauty may secretly have been an additional cause of his prudence on the field of battle. A wound in the face by spoiling his profile, scarring his forehead, or seaming his cheeks, would have spoiled one of the finest heads in Italy, and destroyed the delicate proportions of a countenance such as no woman ever pictured in dreams. In Girodet's picture of the *Revolt of Cairo* there is a young dying Turk who has the same type of face, the same melancholy expression, of which women are nearly always the dupes. The Machese di Montefiore had property of his own, but it was entailed, and he had anticipated his income for several years in order to pay for escapades peculiarly Italian and inconceivable in Paris. He had ruined himself by running a theater in Milan for the special purpose of foisting upon the public a *cantatrice* who could not sing, but who loved him (so he said) to distraction.

So Montefiore the captain had good prospects, and was in no hurry to risk them for a paltry scrap of red ribbon. If he was no hero, he was at any rate a philosopher; besides, precedents (if it is allowable to make use of parliamentary expressions in this connection), precedents are forthcoming. Did not Philip II. swear during the battle of Saint-Quentin that he would never go under fire again, nor near it, save the fagots of the Inquisition? Did not the Duke of Alva approve the notion that the involuntary exchange of a crown for a cannon ball was the worst kind of trade in the world? Montefiore, therefore, as a marquis, was of Philip II.'s way of thinking; he was a Philippist in his quality of gay young bachelor, and in other respects quite as astute a politician as Philip II. himself. He comforted himself for his nickname, and for the slight esteem in which he was held by his regiment, with the thought that his comrades were sorry scamps; and even if they should survive this war of extermination, their opinion of him was not likely to gain much credence hereafter. Was not his face as good as a certificate of merit? He saw himself a colonel

through some accident of feminine fervor; or, by a skillfully effected transition, the captain on the clothing establishment would become an orderly, and the orderly would in turn become the aide-de-camp of some good-natured marshal. The bravery of the uniform and the bravery of the man were all as one to the captain on the clothing establishment. So some broadsheet or other would one day call him "the brave Colonel Montefiore," and so forth. *Then* he would have a hundred thousand scudi a year, he would marry the daughter of a noble house, and no one would dare to breathe a word against his courage nor to seek to verify his wounds. Finally, it should be stated that Captain Montefiore had a friend in the person of the quartermaster, a Provençal, born in the Nice district, Diard by name.

A friend, be it in the convict's prison or in an artist's garret, is a compensation for many troubles; and Montefiore and Diard, being a pair of philosophers, found compensations for their hard life in companionship in vice, much as two artists will lull the consciousness of their hardships to sleep by hopes of future fame. Both looked at war as a means to an end, and not as an end in itself, and frankly called those who fell fools for their pains. Chance had made soldiers of both, when they should have been by rights deliberating in a congress round a table covered with a green cloth. Nature had cast Montefiore in the mold of Rizzio, and Diard in the crucible whence she turns out diplomatists. Both possessed the excitable, nervous, half-feminine temperament, which is always energetic, be it in good or evil; always at the mercy of the caprices of the moment, and swayed by an impulse equally unaccountable to commit a crime or to do a generous deed, to act as a hero or as a craven coward. The fate of such natures as these depends at every moment of their lives upon the intensity of the impressions produced upon the nervous system by vehement and short-lived passions.

Diard was a very fair accountant, but not one of the men would have trusted him with his purse, or made him his executor, possibly by reason of the suspicion that the soldier feels of officialdom. The quartermaster's character was not wanting in dash, nor in a certain boyish enthusiasm, which is apt to wear off as a man grows older and reasons and makes forecasts. And for the rest, his humor was variable as the beauty of a blonde can sometimes be. He was a great talker on every subject. He called himself an artist; and, is imitation of two celebrated generals, collected works of art, simply, he asserted, to secure them for posterity. His comrades would have been hard put to it to say what they really thought of him. Many of them, who were wont to borrow of him at need, fancied that he was rich; but he was a gambler, and a gambler's property cannot be called his own. He played heavily, so did Montefiore, and all the officers played with them; for to man's shame, be it said, plenty of men will meet on terms of equality round a gaming-table with others whom they do not respect and will not recognize if they meet them elsewhere. It was Montefiore who had made that bet with Bianchi about the Spaniard's heart.

Montefiore and Diard were among the last to advance to the assault of the

place, but they were the first to go forward into the town itself when it was taken. Such things happen in a *mêlée*, and the two friends were old hands. Mutually supported, therefore, they plunged boldly into a labyrinth of narrow dark little streets, each bent upon his own private affairs; the one in search of Madonnas on canvas, and the other of living originals.

In some quarter of Taragona, Diard espied a piece of ecclesiastical architecture, saw that it was the porch of a convent, and that the doors had been forced, and rushed in to restrain the fury of the soldiery. He was not a moment too soon. Two Parisians were about to riddle one of Albani's Virgins with shot, and of these light infantrymen he bought the picture, undismayed by the mustaches with which the zealous iconoclasts had adorned it.

Montefiore, left outside, contemplated the front of a cloth merchant's house opposite the convent. He was looking it up and down, when a corner of a blind was raised, a girl's head peered forth, a glance like a lightning flash answered his, and—a shot was fired at him from the building. Taragona carried by assault, Taragona roused to fury, firing from every window, Taragona outraged, disheveled, and half-naked, with French soldiers pouring through her blazing streets, slaying there and being slain, were surely worth a glance from fearless Spanish eyes. What was it but a bull-fight on a grander scale? Montefiore forgot the pillaging soldiers, and for a moment heard neither the shrieks, nor the rattle of musketry, nor the dull thunder of the cannon. He, the Italian libertine, tired of Italian beauties, weary of all women, dreaming of an impossible woman because the possible had ceased to have any attraction for him, had never beheld so exquisitely lovely a profile as that of this Spanish girl. The jaded voluptuary, who had squandered his fortune on follies innumerable and on the gratification of a young man's endless desires; the most abominable monstrosity that our society can produce, could still tremble. The bright idea of setting fire to the house instantly flashed through his mind, suggested, doubtless, by the shot from the patriotic cloth merchant's widow; but he was alone, and the means of doing it were to seek, fighting was going forward in the marketplace, where a few desperate men still defended themselves.

He thought better of it. Diard came out of the convent, Montefiore kept his discovery to himself, and the pair made several excursions through the town together; but on the morrow the Italian was quartered in the cloth merchant's house, a very appropriate arrangement for a captain on the clothing establishment.

The first floor of the worthy Spaniard's abode consisted of a vast dimly-lighted shop; protected in front, as the old houses in the Rue des Lombards in Paris used to be, by heavy iron bars. Behind the shop lay the parlor, lighted by windows that looked out into an inner yard. It was a large room, redolent of the spirit of the Middle Ages, with its old dark pictures, old tapestry, and antique *brazero*. A broad-plumed hat hung from a nail upon the wall above a matchlock used in guerilla warfare, and a heavy brigand's cloak. The kitchen lay immediately beyond this parlor, or living-

room, where meals were served and cigars smoked; and Spaniards, talking round the smoldering brazier, would nurse hot wrath and hatred of the French in their hearts.

Silver jugs and valuable plate stood on the antique buffet, but the room was fitfully and scantily illuminated, so that the daylight scarcely did more than bring out faint sparkles from the brightest objects in the room; all the rest of it, and even the faces of its occupants, were as dark as a Dutch interior. Between the shop itself and this apartment, with its rich subdued tones and old-world aspect, a sufficiently ill-lit staircase led to a warehouse, where it was possible to examine the stuffs by the light from some ingeniously contrived windows. The merchant and his wife occupied the floor above this warehouse, and the apprentice and the maid-servant were lodged still higher in the attics immediately beneath the roof. This highest story overhung the street, and was supported by brackets, which gave a quaint look to the house front. On the coming of the officer, the merchant and his wife resigned their rooms to him and went up to these attics, doubtless to avoid friction.

Montefiore gave himself out to be a Spanish subject by birth, a victim to the tyranny of Napoleon, whom he was forced to serve against his will. These half-lies produced the intended effect. He was asked to join the family at meals, as befitted his birth and rank and the name he bore. He had his private reasons for wishing to conciliate the merchant's family. He felt the presence of his Madonna, much as the Ogre in the fairy tale smelt the tender flesh of little Thumbkin and his brothers; but though he succeeded in winning his host's confidence, the latted kept the secret of the Madonna so well that the captain not only saw no sign of the girl's existence during the first day spent beneath the honest Spaniard's roof, but heard no sound that could betray her presence in any part of the dwelling. The old house was, however, almost entirely built of wood; every noise above or below could be heard through the walls and ceilings, and Montefiore hoped during the silence of the early hours of night to guess the young girl's whereabouts. She was the only daughter of his host and hostess, he thought; probably they had shut her up in the attics, whither they themselves had retired during the military occupation of the town. No indications, however, betrayed the hiding-place of the treasure. The officer might stand with his face glued to the small leaded diamond-shaped panes of the window, looking out into the darkness of the yard below and the grim walls that rose up around it, but no light gleamed from any window save from those of the room overhead, where he could hear the old merchant and his wife talking, coughing, coming and going. There was not so much as a shadow of a girl to be seen.

Montefiore was too cunning to risk the future of his passion by prowling about the house of a night, by knocking softly at all the doors, or by other hazardous expedients. His host was a hot patriot, a Spanish father, and an owner of bales of cloth; bound, therefore, in each character to be suspicious. Discovery would be utter ruin, so Montefiore resolved to bide his time patiently,

hoping everything from the carelessness of human nature; for if rogues, with the best of reasons for being cautious, will forget themselves in the long run, so still more will honest men.

Next day he discovered a kind of hammock slung in the kitchen—evidently the servant slept there. The apprentice, it seemed, spent the night on the counter in the shop.

At supper time, on the second day, Montefiore cursed Napoleon till he saw his host's somber face relax somewhat. The man was a typical, swarthy Spaniard, with a head such as used to be carved on the head of a rebeck. A smile of gleeful hatred lurked among the wrinkles about his wife's mouth. The lamplight and fitful gleams from the brazier filled the stately room with capricious answering reflections. The hostess was just offering a cigarette to their semi-compatriot, when Montefiore heard the rustle of a dress, and a chair was overturned behind the tapestry hangings.

"There!" cried the merchant's wife, turning pale, "may all the saints send that no misfortune has befallen us!"

"So you have someone in there, have you?" asked the Italian, who betrayed no sign of emotion.

The merchant let fall some injurious remarks as to girls. His wife, in alarm, opened a secret door, and brought in the Italian's Madonna, half dead with fear. The delighted lover scarcely seemed to notice the girl; but, lest he might overdo the affectation of indifference, he glanced at her, and turning to his host, asked in his mother tongue—

"Is she your daughter, señor?"

Perez de Lagounia (for that was the merchant's name) had had extensive business connections in Genoa, Florence, and Leghorn; he knew Italian, and replied in that language.

"No. If she had been my own daughter, I should have taken fewer precautions, but the child was put into our charge, and I would die sooner than allow the slightest harm to befall her. But what sense can you expect of a girl of eighteen?"

"She is very beautiful," Montefiore said carelessly. He did not look at her again.

"The mother is sufficiently famous for her beauty," answered the merchant. And they continued to smoke and to watch each other.

Montefiore had imposed upon himself the hard task of avoiding the least look that might compromise his attitude of indifference; but as Perez turned his head aside to spit, the Italian stole a glance at the girl, and again those sparkling eyes met his. In that one glance, with the experienced vision that gives to a voluptuary or a sculptor the power of discerning the outlines of the form beneath the draperies, he beheld a masterpiece created to know all the happiness of love. He saw a delicately fair face, which the sun of Spain had slightly tinged with a warm brown, that added to a seraphically calm expression a flush of pride, a suffused glow beneath the translucent fairness, due, perhaps, to the pure Moorish blood that brought animation and color into it. Her hair, knotted on the crown of her head, fell in thick curls about transparent ears like a child's, surrounding them with dark shadows that made a framework for the white throat with its faint blue veins.

in strong contrast with the fiery eyes and red finely-curved mouth. The *basquina* of her country displayed the curving outlines of a figure as pliant as a branch of willow. This was no Madonna of Italian painters, but the Madonna of Spanish art, the Virgin of Murillo, the only artist daring enough to depict the rapture of the Conception, a delirious flight of the fervid imagination of the boldest and most sensuous of painters. Three qualities were blended in this young girl; any one of them would have sufficed to exalt a woman into a divinity —the purity of the pearl in the depths of the sea, the sublime exaltation of a Saint Theresa, and a voluptuous charm of which she was herself unconscious. Her presence had the power of a talisman. Everything in the ancient room seemed to have grown young to Montefiore's eyes since she entered it. But if the apparition was exquisite, the stay was brief; she was taken back to her mysterious abiding-place, and thither, shortly afterwards, the servant took a light and her supper, without any attempt at concealment.

"You do very wisely to keep her out of sight," said Montefiore in Italian. "I will keep your secret. The deuce! some of our generals would be quite capable of carrying her off by force."

Montefiore, in his intoxication, went so far as to think of marrying the fair unknown. With this idea in his mind, he put questions to his host. Perez willingly told him the strange chance that had given him his ward; indeed, the prudent Spaniard, knowing Montefiore's rank and name, of which he had heard in Italy, was anxious to confide the story to his guest, to show how strong were the barriers raised between the young girl and seduction. Although in the good man's talk there was a certain homely eloquence and force in keeping with his simple manner of life, and with that carbine shot at Montefiore from the window, his story will be better given in an abbreviated form.

When the French Republic revolutionized the manners of the inhabitants of the countries which served as the theater of its wars, a *fille-de-joie,* driven from Venice after the fall of Venice, came to Taragona. Her life had been a tissue of romantic adventure and strange vicissitudes. On no woman belonging to her class had gold been showered so often; so often the caprice of some great lord, struck with her extraordinary beauty, had heaped jewels upon her, and all the luxuries of wealth, for a time. For her this meant flowers and carriages, pages and tire-women, palaces and pictures, insolent pride, journeys like a progress of Catherine II., the life of an absolute queen, in fact, whose caprices were law, and whose whims were more than obeyed; and then—suddenly the gold would utterly vanish—how, neither she nor anyone else, man of science, physicist, or chemist could tell, and she was returned again to the streets and to poverty, with nothing in the world save her all-powerful beauty. Yet through it all she lived without taking any thought for the past, the present, or the future. Thrown upon the world, and maintained in her extremity by some poor officer, a gambler, adored for his mustache, she would attach herself to him like a dog to his master, and console him for the hardships of a soldier's life, in all of which

she shared, sleeping as lightly under the roof of a garret as beneath the richest of silk canopies. Whether she was in Spain or Italy, she punctually adhered to religious observances. More than once she had bidden love "return to-morrow, to-day I am God's."

But this clay in which gold and spices were mingled, this utter recklessness, these storms of passion, the religious faith lying in the heart like a diamond in the mud, the life begun and ended in the hospital, the continual game of hazard played with the soul and body as its stake; this Alchemy of Life, in short, with vice fanning the flame beneath the crucible in which great careers and fair inheritances and fortune and the honor of illustrious names were melted away; all these were the products of a peculiar genius, faithfully transmitted from mother to daughter from the times of the Middle Ages. The woman was called *La Marana*. In her family, whose descent since the thirteenth century was reckoned exclusively on the spindle side —the idea, person, authority, nay, the very name of a father, had been absolutely unknown. The name of *Marana* was for her what the dignity of *Stuart* was to the illustrious race of kings of Scotland, a title of honor substituted for the patronymic, when the office became hereditary in their family.

In former times, when France, Spain, and Italy possessed common interests, which at times bound them closely together, and at least as frequently embroiled all three in wars, the word Marana, in its widest acceptation, meant a courtesan. In those ages these women had a definite status of which no memory now exists. In France, Ninon de Lenclos and Marion Delorme alone played such a part as the Imperias, the Catalinas, and Maranas who in the preceding centuries exercised the powers of the cassock, the robe, and the sword. There is a church somewhere in Rome built by an Imperia in a fit of penitence, as Rhodope of old once built a pyramid in Egypt. The epithet by which this family of outcasts once was branded became at last their name in earnest, and even something like a patent of nobility for vice. by establishing its antiquity beyond cavil.

But for the La Marana of the nineteenth century there came a day, whether it was a day of splendor or of misery, no man knows, for the problem is a secret between her soul and God; but it was surely in an hour of melancholy, when religion made its voice heard, that with her head in the skies she became conscious of the slough in which her feet were set. Then she cursed the blood in her veins; she cursed herself; she trembled to think that she should bear a daughter; and vowed, as these women vow, with the honor and resolution of the convict, that is to say, with the strongest resolution, the most scrupulous honor to be found under the sun; making her vow, therefore, before an altar, and consecrating it thereby, that her daughter should lead a virtuous and holy life, that of this long race of lost and sinful women there should come at last one angel who should appear for them in heaven. That vow made, the blood of the Marana regained its sway, and again the courtesan plunged into her life of adventure, with one more thought in her heart. At length she loved, with the violent love of the

prostitute, as Henrietta Wilson loved Lord Ponsonby, as Mlle. Dupuis loved Bolingbroke, as the Marchesa di Pescara loved her husband; nay, she did not love, she adored a fair-haired half-feminine creature, investing him with all the virtues that she had not, and taking all his vices upon herself. Of this mad union with a weakling, a union blessed neither of God nor man, only to be excused by the happiness it brings, but never absolved by happiness; a union for which the most brazen front must one day blush, a daughter was born, a daughter to be saved, a daughter for whom La Marana desired a stainless life, and, above all things, the instincts of womanliness which she herself had not. Thenceforward, in poverty or prosperity, La Marana bore within her heart a pure affection, the fairest of all human sentiments, because it is the least selfish. Love has its own tinge of egoism, but there is no trace of it in a mother's affection.

And La Marana's motherhood meant more to her than to other women. It was perhaps her hope of salvation, a plank to cling to in the shipwreck of her eternity. Was she not accomplishing part of her sacred task on earth by sending one more angel to heaven? Was not this a better thing than a tardy repentance? Was there any other way now left to her of sending up prayers from a pure heart to God?

When her daughter was given to her, her Maria-Juana-Pepita (the little one should have had the whole calendar for patron saints if the mother could have had her will), then La Marana set before herself so high an ideal of the dignity of motherhood that she sought a truce from her life of sin. She would live virtuously and alone. There should be no more midnight revels nor wanton days. All her fortunes, all her happiness lay in the child's fragile cradle. The sound of the little voice made an oasis for her amid the burning sands of her life. How should this love be compared with any other? Were not all human affections blended in it with every hope of Heaven?

La Marana determined that no stain should rest upon her daughter's life, save that of the original sin of her birth, which she strove to cleanse by a baptism in all social virtues; so she asked of the child's young father a sufficient fortune, and the name he bore. The child was no longer Juana Marana, but Juana dei Mancini.

At last, after seven years of joy and kisses, of rapture and bliss, the poor Marana must part with her darling, lest she also should be branded with her hereditary shame. The mother had force of soul sufficient to give up her child for her child's sake; and sought out, not without dreadful pangs, another mother for her, a family whose manners she might learn, where good examples would be set before her. A mother's abdication is an act either atrocious or sublime; in this case, was it not sublime?

At Taragona, therefore, a lucky accident brought the Lagounias in her way, and in a manner that brought out all the honorable integrity of the Spaniard and the nobleness of his wife. For these two, La Marana appeared like an angel that unlocks the doors of a prison. The merchant's fortune and honor were in peril at the moment, and he needed prompt and secret help; La Marana

handed over to him the sum of money intended for Juana's dowry, asking neither for gratitude nor for interest. According to her peculiar notions of jurisprudence, a contract was a matter of the heart, a stiletto the remedy in the hands of the weak, and God the supreme Court of Appeal.

She told Doña Lagounia the story of her miserable situation, and confided her child and her child's fortune to the honor of old Spain, and the untarnished integrity that pervaded the old house. Doña Lagounia had no children of her own, and was delighted to have an adopted daughter to bring up. The courtesan took leave of her darling, feeling that the child's future was secure, and that she had found a mother for Juana, a mother who would train her up to be a Mancini, and not a Marana.

Poor Marana, poor bereaved mother, she went away from the merchant's quiet and humble home, the abode of domestic and family virtue; and felt comforted in her grief as she pictured Juana growing up in that atmosphere of religion, piety, and honor, a maiden, a wife, and a mother, a happy mother, not for a few brief years, but all through a long lifetime. The tears that fell upon the threshold were tears that angels bear to heaven. Since that day of mourning and of hope La Marana had thrice returned to see her daughter, an irresistible presentiment each time bringing her back. The first time Juana had fallen dangerously ill.

"I knew it!" she said to Perez, as she entered his house.

Far away, and as she slept, she had dreamed that Juana was dying.

She watched over her daughter and tended her, and then one morning, when the danger was over, she kissed the sleeping girl's forehead, and went without revealing herself. The mother within her bade the courtesan depart.

A second time La Marana came,—this time to the church where Juana dei Mancini made her first Communion. The exiled mother, very plainly dressed, stood in the shadow behind a pillar, and saw her past self in her daughter, saw a divinely fair face like an angel's pure as the newly fallen snow on the heights of the hills. Even in La Marana's love for her child there was a trace of the courtesan; a feeling of jealousy stronger than all love that she had known awoke in her heart, and she left the church; she could no longer control a wild desire to stab Doña Lagounia, who stood there with that look of happiness upon her face, too really a mother to her child.

The last meeting between the two had taken place at Milan, whither the merchant and his wife had gone. La Marana, sweeping along the Corso in almost queenly state, flashed like lightning upon her daughter's sight, and was not recognized. Her anguish was terrible. This Marana on whom kisses were showered must hunger for one kiss in vain, one for which she would have given all the others, the girlish glad caress a daughter gives her mother, her honored mother, her mother in whom all womanly vitues shine. Juana as long as she lived was dead for her.

"What is it, love?" asked the Duc de Lina, and at the words a thought revived the courtesan's failing heart, a thought that gave her delicious happiness—Juana was safe henceforward! She might perhaps be one of the humblest of women,

but not a shameless courtesan to whom any man might say, "What is it, love?"

Indeed, the merchant and his wife had done their duty with scrupulous fidelity. Juana's fortune in their hands had been doubled. Perez de Lagounia had become the richest merchant in the province, and in his feelings towards the young girl there was a trace of superstition. Her coming had saved the old house from ruin and dishonor, and had not the presence of this angel brought unlooked-for prosperity? His wife, a soul of gold, a refined and gentle nature, had brought up her charge devoutly; the girl was as pure as she was beautiful. Juana was equally fitted to be the wife of a rich merchant or of a noble; she had every qualification for a brilliant destiny. But for the war that had broken out, Perez, who dreamed of living in Madrid, would ere now have given her in marriage to some Spanish grandee.

"I do not know where La Marana is at this moment," he concluded; "but wherever she may be, if she hears that our province is occupied by your armies, and that Taragona has been besieged, she is sure to be on her way hither to watch over her daughter."

This story wrought a change in the captain's intentions; he no longer thought of making a Marchesa di Montefiore of Juana dei Mancini. He recognized the Marana blood in that swift glance the girl had exchanged with him from her shelter behind the blind, in the stratagem by which she had satisfied her curiosity, in that last look she had given him; and the libertine meant to marry a virtuous wife.

This would be a dangerous escapade, no doubt, but the perils were of the kind that never sinks the courage of the most pusillanimous, for love and its pleasures would reward them. There were obstacles everywhere: there was the apprentice who slept on the counter, and the servant-maid on the makeshift couch in the kitchen; Perez and his wife, who kept a dragon's watch by day, were old, and doubtless slept lightly; every sound echoed through the house, everything seemed to put the adventure beyond the range of possibilities. But as a set-off against these things, Montefiore had an ally—the blood of the Marana, which throbbed feverishly in the heart of the lovely Italian girl brought up as a Spaniard, the maiden athirst for love. Passion, the girl's nature, and Montefiore was a combination that might defy the whole world.

Prompted quite as strongly by the instincts of a chartered libertine as by the vague inexplicable hopes to which we give the name of presentiments, a word that describes them with such startling aptness—Montefiore took up his stand at his window, and spent the early hours of the night there, looking down in the presumed direction of the secret hiding-place, where the old couple had enshrined their darling, the joy of their old age.

The warehouse on the *entresol* (to make use of a French word that will perhaps make the disposition of the house clearer to the reader) separated the two young people, so it was idle for the captain to try to convey a message by means of tapping upon the floor, a shift for speech that all lovers can devise under such circumstances. Chance, however, came to his assistance, or was it the young girl herself? Just as he took his

stand at the window he saw a circle of light that fell upon the grim opposite wall of the yard, and in the midst of it a dark silhouette, the form of Juana. Everything that she did was shadowed there; from her attitude and the movement of her arms, she seemed to be arranging her hair for the night.

"Is she alone?" Montefiore asked himself. "If I weight a letter with a few coins, will it be safe to dangle it by a thread against the round window that no doubt lights her cell?"

He wrote a note forthwith, a note characteristic of the officer, of the soldier sent for reasons of family expediency to the isle of Elba, of the former dilettante Marquis, fallen from his high estate, and become a captain on the clothing establishment. He wrapped some coins in the note, devised a string out of various odds and ends, tied up the packet and let it down, without a sound, into the very center of that round brightness.

"If her mother or the servant is with her," Montefiore thought, "I shall see the shadows on the wall; and if she is not alone, I will draw up the cord at once."

But when, after pains innumerable, which can readily be imagined, the weighted packet tapped at the glass, only one shadow appeared, and it was the slender figure of Juana that flitted across the wall. Noiselessly the young girl opened the circular window, saw the packet, took it in, and stood for a while reading it.

Montefiore had written in his own name and entreated an interview. He offered, in the style of old romances, his heart and hand to Juana dei Mancini—a base and commonplace stratagem that nearly always succeeds! At Juana's age, is not nobility of soul an added danger? A poet of our own days has gracefully said that "only in her strength does woman yield." Let a lover, when he is most beloved, feign doubts of the love that he inspires, and in her pride and her trust in him, a girl would invent sacrifices for his sake, knowing neither the world nor man's nature well enough to retain her self-command when passion stirs within her, and to overwhelm with her scorn the lover who can accept a whole life offered to him to turn away a groundless reproach.

In our sublimely constituted society a young girl is placed in a painful dilemma between the forecastles of prudent virtue on the one hand, and the consequences of error upon the other. If she resists, it not seldom happens that she loses a lover and the first love, that is the most attractive of all; and if she is imprudent, she loses a marriage. Cast an eye over the vicissitudes of social life in Paris, and it is impossible to doubt the necessity of a religion that shall insure that there are no more young girls seduced daily. And Paris is situated in the forty-eighth degree of latitude, while Taragona lies below the forty-first. The old question of climate is still useful to the novelist seeking an excuse for the suddenness of his catastrophe, and is made to explain the imprudence or the dilatoriness of a pair of lovers.

Montefiore's eyes were fixed meanwhile on the charming silhouette in the midst of the bright circle. Neither he nor Juana could see each other; an unlucky archway above her casement, with perverse malignity, cut off all chances

of communication by signs, such as two lovers can contrive by leaning out of their windows. So the captain concentrated his whole mind and attention upon the round patch on the wall. Perhaps all unwittingly the girl's movements might betray her thoughts. Here again he was foiled. Juana's strange proceedings gave Montefiore no room for the faintest hope; she was amusing herself by cutting up the billet.

It often happens that virtue and discretion, in distrust, adopt shifts familiar to the jealous Bartholos of comedy. Juana, having neither paper, pen, nor ink, was scratching an answer with the point of a pair of scissors. In another moment she tied the scrap of paper to the string, the officer drew it in, opened it, held it up against the lamp, and read the perforated characters—"Come," it said.

"'Come?'" said he to himself. "Poison, and carbine, and Perez's dagger! And how about the apprentice hardly asleep on the counter by this time, and the servant in her hammock, and the house booming like a bass viol with every sound? why, I can hear old Perez snoring away upstairs! 'Come!' . . . Then, has she nothing to lose?"

Acute reflection! Libertines alone can reason thus logically, and punish a woman for her devotion. The imagination of man has created Satan and Lovelace, but a maiden is an angelic being to whom he can lend nothing but his vices; so lofty, so fair is she, that he cannot see her higher nor add to her beauty; he has but the fatal power of blighting this creation by dragging it down to his miry level.

Montefiore waited till the drowsiest hour of the night, then in spite of his sober second thoughts, he crept downstairs. He had taken off his shoes, and carried his pistols with him, and now he groped his way step by step, stopping to listen in the silence; trying each separate stair, straining his eyes till he almost saw in the darkness, and ready to turn back at any moment if the least thing befell him. He wore his handsomest uniform; he had perfumed his dark hair, and taken pains with the toilette that set off his natural good looks. On occasions like these, most men are as much a woman as any woman.

Montefiore managed to reach the door of the girl's secret hiding-place without difficulty. It was a little cabinet contrived in a corner which projected into another dwelling, a not unusual freak of the builder where ground-rents are high, and houses in consequence packed very tightly together. Here Juana lived alone, day and night, out of the sight of all eyes. Hitherto she had slept near her adopted mother; but when Perez and his wife removed to the top of the house, the arrangements of the attics did not permit of their taking their ward thither also. So Doña Lagounia had left the girl to the guardianship of the lock of the secret door, to the protection of religious ideas, but so much the more powerful because they had become superstitions; and with the further safeguards of a natural pride, and the shrinking delicacy of the sensitive plant, which made Juana an exception among her sex, for to the most pathetic innocence Juana Mancini united no less the most passionate aspirations. It had needed a retired life and devout training to quiet and to cool the hot blood of the Maranas

that glowed in her veins, the impulses that her adopted mother called temptations of the Evil One.

A faint gleam of light beneath the door in the panels discovered its whereabouts for Montefiore. He tapped softly with the tips of his finger-nails, and Juana let him in. Quivering from head to foot with excitement, he met the young girl's look of naïve curiosity, and read the most complete ignorance of her peril, and a sort of childlike admiration in her eyes. He stood, awed for a moment by the picture of the sanctuary before him.

The walls were hung with gay tapestry, covered with violet flowers. A small ebony chest, an antique mirror, a huge old-fashioned armchair, also made of ebony, and covered with tapestry; another chair beside the spindle-legged table, a pretty carpet on the floor—that was all. But there were flowers on the table beside some embroidery work, and at the other end of the room stood the little narrow bed on which Juana dreamed; three pictures hung on the wall above it, and at the head stood a crucifix above a little holy water stoup, and a prayer framed and illuminated in gold. The room was full of the faint perfume of the flowers, of the soft light of the tapers; it all seemed so quiet, pure, and sacred. The subtle charm of Juana's dreamy fancies, nay, of Juana herself, seemed to pervade everything; her soul was revealed by her surroundings; the pearl lay there in its shell.

Juana, clad in white, with no ornament save her own loveliness, letting fall her rosary to call on the name of Love, would have inspired even Montefiore with reverence if it had not been for the night about them and the silence, if Juana had welcomed love less eagerly, if the little white bed had not displayed the turned-down coverlet—the pillow, confidante of innumerable vague longings. Montefiore stood there for long, intoxicated by joy hitherto unknown; such joy as Satan, it may be, would know at a glimpse of paradise if the cloud-veil that envelops heaven was rent away for a moment.

"I loved you the first moment that I saw you," he said, speaking pure Tuscan in the tones of his musical Italian voice. "In you my soul and my life are set; if you so will it, they shall be yours forever."

To Juana listening, the air she breathed seemed to vibrate with the words grown magical upon her lover's tongue.

"Poor little girl! how have you breathed the atmosphere of this gloomy place so long, and lived? You, meant to reign like a queen in the world, to dwell in the palace of a prince, to pass from festival to festival, to feel in your own heart the joys that you create, to see the world at your feet, to make the fairest splendors pale before the glorious beauty that shall never be rivaled,—*you* have lived here in seclusion with this old tradesman and his wife!"

There was a purpose in his exclamation; he wanted to find out whether or no Juana had ever had a lover.

"Yes," she answered. "But who can have told you my inmost thoughts? For twelve months past I have been weary to death of it. Yes, I would die rather than stay any longer in this house. Do you see this embroidery? I have set countless dreadful thoughts into every

stitch of it. How often I have longed to run away and fling myself into the sea! Do you ask why? I have forgotten already. . . . Childish troubles, but very keenly felt in spite of their childishness. . . . Often at night when I kissed my mother, I have given her such a kiss as one gives for a last farewell, saying in my heart, 'I will kill myself to-morrow.' After all, I did not die. Suicides go to hell, and I was so much afraid of that, that I made up my mind to endure my life, to get up and go to bed, and do the same things hour after hour of every day. My life was not irksome, it was painful.—And yet, my father and mother worship me. Oh! I am wicked! indeed, I tell my confessor so."

"Then have you always lived here without amusements, without pleasures?"

"Oh! I have not always felt like this. Until I was fifteen years old, I enjoyed seeing the festivals of the Church; I loved the singing and the music. I was so happy, because I felt that, like the angels, I was sinless, so glad that I might take the sacrament every week, in short, I loved God then. But in these three years I have changed utterly, day by day. It began when I wanted flowers here in the house, and they gave me very beautiful ones; then I wanted. . . . But now I want nothing any longer," she added, after a pause, and she smiled at Montefiore.

"Did you not tell me just now in your letter that you would love me forever?"

"Yes, my Juana," murmured Montefiore. He put his arm round the waist of this adorable girl, and pressed her closely to his heart. "Yes. But let me speak to you as you pray to God. Are you not fairer than Our Lady in heaven? Hear me," and he set a kiss in her hair, "for me that forehead of yours is the fairest altar on earth; I swear to worship you, my idol, to pour out all the wealth of the world upon you. My carriages are yours, my palace in Milan is yours, yours all the jewels and the diamonds, the heirlooms of my ancient house; new ornaments and dresses every day, and all the countless pleasures and delights of the world."

"Yes," she said, "I should like it all very much; but in my soul I feel that I should love my dear husband more than all things else in the world."

Mio caro sposo! Italian was Juana's native speech, and it is impossible to put into two words of another language the wonderful tenderness, the winning grace with which that brief delicious phrase is invested by the accents of an Italian tongue. "I shall find," she said, and the purity of a seraph shone in her eyes, "I shall find my beloved religion again in *him*. His and God's, God's and his! . . . But you are he, are you not?" she cried after a pause. "Surely, surely you are he! Ah! come and see the picture that my father brought me from Italy."

She took up a candle, beckoned to Montefiore, and showed him a picture that hung at the foot of the bed—Saint Michael trampling Satan underfoot.

"Look!" she cried, "has he not your eyes? That made me think, as soon as I saw you in the street, that in the meeting I saw the finger of heaven. So often I have lain awake in the morning before my mother came to call me to prayer, thinking about that picture, looking at the angel, until at last I came to

think that he was my husband. *Mon Dieu!* I am talking as I think to myself. What wild nonsense it must seem to you! but if you only knew how a poor recluse longs to pour out the thoughts that oppress her! I used to talk to these flowers and the woven garlands on the tapestry when I was alone; they understood me better, I think, than my father and mother—always so serious——"

"Juana," said Montefiore, and as he took her hands and kissed them, passion shone in his eyes and overflowed in his gestures and in the sound of his voice, "talk to me as if I were your husband, talk to me as you talk to yourself. I have suffered all that you have suffered. Few words will be needed, when we talk together, to bring back the whole past of either life before we met; but there are not words enough in language to tell of the bliss that lies before us. Lay your hand on my heart. Do you feel how it beats? Let us vow, before God, who sees and hears us, to be faithful to each other all our lives. Stay, take this ring. —Give me yours."

"Give away my ring?" she cried, startled.

"Why not?" asked Montefiore, dismayed by so much simplicity.

"Why, it came to me from our Holy Father the Pope. When I was a little girl a beautiful lady set it on my finger; she took care of me, and brought me here, and she told me to keep it always."

"Then you do not love me, Juana?"

"Ah! here it is," she cried. "Are you not more myself than I?"

She held out the ring, trembling as she did so, keeping her fingers tightly clasped upon it as she looked at Montefiore with clear, questioning eyes. That ring meant her whole self: she gave it to him.

"Oh! my Juana!" said Montefiore as he held her closely in his arms, "only a monster could be false to you. . . . I will love you forever. . . ."

Juana grew dreamy. Montefiore, thinking within himself that, in his first interview, he must not run the slightest risk of startling a girl so innocent, whose imprudence sprang rather from virtue than from desire, was fain to content himself with thinking of the future, of her beauty now that he had known its power, and of the innocent marriage of the ring, that most sublime of betrothals, the simplest and most binding of all ceremonies, the betrothal of the heart.

For the rest of the night, and all day long on the morrow, Juana's imagination would surely become the accomplice of his desires. So he put constraint upon himself, and tried to be as respectful as he was tender. With these thoughts present in his mind, prompted by his passion, and yet more by the desires that Juana inspired in him, his words were insinuating and fervent. He led the innocent child to plan out the new life before them, painted the world for her in the most glowing colors, dwelt on the household details that possess such a delightful interest for young girls, and made with her the compacts over which lovers dispute, the agreements that give rights and reality to love. Then, when they had decided the hour for their nightly tryst, he went, leaving a happy but a changed Juana. The simple and innocent Juana no longer existed, already there was more passion than a girl should reveal in the last glance that she gave

him, in the charming way that she held up her forehead for the touch of her lover's lips. It was all the result of solitude and irksome tasks upon this nature; if she was to be prudent and virtuous, the knowledge of the world should either have come to her gradually, or have been hidden from her forever.

"How slowly the day will go to-morrow!" she said, as another kiss, still respectfully given, was pressed upon her forehead.

"But you will sit in the dining-room, will you not? and raise your voice a little when you talk, so that I may hear you, and the sound may fill my heart."

Montefiore, beginning to understand the life that Juana led, was but the better pleased that he had managed to restrain his desires that he might the better secure his end. He returned to his room without mishap.

Ten days went by, and nothing occurred to disturb the peace and quiet of the house. Montefiore, with the persuasive manners of an Italian, had gained the good graces of old Perez and Doña Lagounia; indeed, he was popular with the whole household—with the apprentice and the maid-servant; but in spite of the confidence that he had succeeded in inspiring in them, he never attempted to take advantage of it to ask to see Juana, or to open the door of that little sealed paradise. The Italian girl, in her longing to see her lover, had often besought him to do this, but from motives of prudence he had always refused. On the contrary, he had used the character he had gained and all his skill to lull the suspicions of the old couple; he had accustomed them to his habit of never rising till mid-day, soldier as he was. The captain gave out that his health was bad. So the two lovers only lived at night when all the household was asleep.

If Montefiore had not been a libertine to whom a long experience of pleasure had given presence of mind under all conditions, they would have been lost half a score of times in those ten days. A young lover, with the single-heartedness of first love, would have been tempted in his rapture into imprudences that were very hard to resist; but the Italian was proof even against Juana, against her pouting lips, her wild spirits, against a Juana who wound the long plaits of her hair about his throat to keep him by her side. The keenest observer would have been sorely puzzled to detect those midnight meetings. It may well be believed that the Italian, sure of his ultimate success, enjoyed prolonging the ineffable pleasure of this intrigue in which he made progress step by step, in fanning the flame that gradually waxed hotter, till everything must yield to it at last.

On the eleventh day, as they sat at dinner, he deemed it expedient to confide to Perez (under the seal of secrecy) the history of the disgrace into which he had fallen among his family. It was a mésalliance, he said.

There was something revolting in this lie, told as a confidence, while that midnight drama was in progress beneath the old man's roof. Montefiore, an experienced actor, was leading up to a catastrophe planned by himself; and, like an artist who loves his art, he enjoyed the thought of it. He meant very shortly to take leave of the house and of his

lady-love without regret. And when Juana, risking her life it might be to ask the question, should inquire of Perez what had become of their guest, Perez would tell her, all unwittingly, that "the Marchese di Montefiore has been reconciled with his family; they have consented to receive his wife, and he has taken her to them."

And Juana? . . . The Italian never inquired of himself what would become of her; he had had ample opportunity of knowing her nobleness, her innocence, and her goodness, and felt sure that Juana would keep silence.

He obtained a message to carry for some general or other. Three days afterwards, on the night before he must start, Montefiore went straight to Juana's room instead of going first to his own. The same instinct that bids the tiger leave no morsel of his prey, prompted the Italian to lengthen the night of farewells. Juana, the true daughter of two southern lands, with the passion of Spain and of Italy in her heart, was enraptured by the boldness that brought her lover to her and revealed the ardor of his love. To know the delicious torment of an illicit passion under the sanction of marriage, to conceal her husband behind the bed-curtains, half deceiving the adopted father and mother, to whom she could say in case of discovery, "I am the Marchesa di Montefiore," was not this a festival for the young and romantic girl who, for three years past, had dreamed of love—love always beset with perils? The curtains of the door fell, drawing about their madness and their happiness a veil which it is useless to raise.

It was nearly nine o'clock, the merchant and his wife were reading the evening prayer, when suddenly the sound of a carriage, drawn by several horses, came from the narrow street without. Someone knocked hastily and loudly at the door of the shop. The servant ran to open it, and in a moment a women sprang into the quaint old room—a woman magnificently dressed, though her traveling carriage was besplashed by the mire of many roads, for she had crossed Italy and France and Spain. It was La Marana! La Marana, in spite of her thirty-six years and her riotous life, in the full pride of her *beltà folgorante,* to record the superb epithet invented for her in Milan by her enraptured adorers. La Marana, the openly avowed mistress of a king, had left Naples and its festivals and sunny skies, at the very height and summit of her strange career—had left gold and madrigals and silk and perfumes, and her royal lover, when she learned from him what was passing in Spain, and how that Taragona was besieged.

"Taragona!" she cried, "and before the city is taken! I must be in Taragona in ten days!" And without another thought for courts or crowned heads, she had reached Taragona, provided with a passport that gave her something like the powers of an empress, and with gold that enabled her to cross the French empire with the speed and splendor of a rocket. There is no such thing as distance for a mother; she who is a mother, indeed, sees her child, and knows by instinct how he fares though they are as far as the poles apart.

"My daughter? my daughter?" cried La Marana.

At that cry, at this swift invasion of their house, and apparition of a queen

traveling incognito, Perez and his wife let the prayer-book fall; that voice rang in their ears like a thunder-clap, and La Marana's eyes flashed lightnings.

"She is in there," the merchant answered quietly, after a brief pause, during which they recovered from the shock of surprise caused by La Marana's sudden appearance, and by her look and tone. "She is in there," he said again, indicating the little hiding-place.

"Yes, but has she not been ill? Is she quite——"

"Perfectly well," said Doña Lagounia.

"Oh, God!" cried La Marana, "plunge me now in hell for all eternity, if it be Thy pleasure," and she sank down utterly exhausted into a chair.

The flush that anxiety had brought to her face faded suddenly; her cheeks grew white; she who had borne up bravely under the strain, had no strength left when it was over. The joy was too intolerable, a joy more intense than her previous distress, for she was still vibrating with dread, when bliss keen as anguish came upon her.

"But how have you done?" she asked. "Taragona was taken by assault."

"Yes," answered Perez. "But when you saw that I was alive, how could you ask such a question? How should anyone reach Juana but over my dead body?"

The courtesan grasped Perez's horny hand on receiving this answer; tears gathered in her eyes and fell upon his fingers as she kissed them—the costliest of all things under the sun for her, who never wept.

"Brave Perez!" she said at last; "but surely there are soldiers billeted upon you, are there not?"

"Only one," answered the Spaniard. "Luckily, we have one of the most honorable of men, an Italian by nationality, a Spaniard by birth, a hater of Bonaparte, a married man, a steady character. He rises late, and goes to bed early. He is in bad health, too, just now."

"An Italian! What is his name?"

"Captain Montefiore, he——"

"Why, he is not the Marchese di Montefiore, is he?"

"Yes, señora, the very same."

"Has he seen Juana?"

"No," said Doña Lagounia.

"You are mistaken, wife," said Perez. "The Marquis must have seen Juana once, only for a moment, it is true, but I think he must have seen her that day when she came in at supper-time."

"Ah!—I should like to see my daughter."

"Nothing is easier," said Perez. "She is asleep. Though if she has left the key in the lock, we shall have to wake her."

As the merchant rose to take down the duplicate key from its place, he happened to glance up through the tall window. The light from the large round pane-opening of Juana's cell fell upon the dark wall on the opposite side of the yard, tracing a gleaming circle there, and in the midst of the lighted space he saw two shadowy figures such as no sculptor till the time of the gifted Canova could have dreamed of. The Spaniard turned to the room again.

"I do not know," he said to La Marana, "where we have put the key——"

"You look very pale!" she exclaimed.

"I will soon tell you why," he answered, as he sprang towards his dagger,

caught it up, and beat violently on the door in the paneling. "Open the door!" he shouted. "Juana! open the door!"

There was an appalling despair in his tones that struck terror into the two women who heard him.

Juana did not open, because there was some delay in hiding Montefiore. She knew nothing of what had passed in the room without. The tapestry hangings on either side of the door deadened all sounds.

"Madame," said Perez, turning to La Marana, "I told you just now that I did not know where the key was. That was a lie. Here it is," and he took it from the sideboard, "but it is useless. Juana's key is in the lock, and her door is barricaded.—We are deceived, wife! There is a man in Juana's room."

"By my hopes of salvation, the thing is impossible!" said Doña Lagounia.

"Do not perjure yourself, Doña Lagounia. Our honor is slain; and *she*" (he turned to La Marana, who had risen to her feet, and stood motionless as if thunderstruck by his words), "she may well scorn us. She saved our lives, our fortune, and our honor, and we have barely guarded her money for her.—Juana, open the door!" he shouted, "or I will break it down!"

The whole house rang with the cry; his voice grew louder and angrier; but he was cool and self-possessed. He held Montefiore's life in his hands, in another moment he would wash away his remorse in every drop of the Italian's blood.

"Go out! go out! go out! all of you!" cried La Marana, and springing upon the dagger like a tigress, she snatched it from the hands of the astonished Perez. "Go out of this room, Perez," she went on, speaking quite quietly now. "Go out, you and your wife, and the maid and the apprentice. There will be a murder here directly, and you might all be shot down by the French for it. Do not you mix yourself up in it, it is my affair entirely. When my daughter and I meet, God alone should be present. As for the man, he is mine. The whole world should not snatch him out of my hands. There, there, go! I forgive you. I see it all. The girl is a Marana. My blood flows in her veins, and you, your religion, and your honor have been powerless against it."

Her groan was dreadful to hear. She turned dry eyes upon them. She had lost everything, but she was accustomed to suffering; she was a courtesan. The door opened. La Marana henceforth heeded nothing else, and Perez, making a sign to his wife, could remain at his post. The old Spaniard, implacable where honor was concerned, determined to assist the wronged mother's vengeance. Juana, in her white draperies, stood quietly there in her room in the soft lamplight. "What do you want with me?" she asked.

In spite of herself, a light shudder ran through La Marana.

"Perez," she asked, "is there any other way out of this closet?"

Perez shook his head; and on that the courtesan went into the room.

"Juana," she said, "I am your mother, your judge—you have put yourself in the one situation in which I can reveal myself to you. You have come to my level, you whom I had thought to raise to heaven. Oh! you have fallen very low! . . . You have a lover in your room."

"Madame, no one but my husband should or could be there," she answered. "I am the Marchesa di Montefiore."

"Then are there two of them?" asked old Perez sternly. "He told me that he was married."

"Montefiore! my love!" cried the girl, rending the curtains, and discovering the officer; "come forward, these people are slandering you."

The Italian's face was haggard and pale; he saw the dagger in La Marana's hand, and he knew La Marana. At one bound he sprang out of the chamber, and with a voice of thunder shouted, "Help! help! murder! they are killing a Frenchman!—Soldiers of the Sixth of the line, run for Captain Diard! . . . Help!"

Perez had secured the Marquis, and was about to gag him by putting his large hand over the soldier's mouth, when the courtesan stopped him.

"Hold him fast," she said, "but let him call. Throw open the doors, and leave them open; and now go out, all of you, I tell you!—As for you," she continued, addressing Montefiore, "shout, and call for help. . . . As soon as there is a sound of your men's footsteps, this blade will be in your heart. . . . Are you married? Answer me."

Montefiore, lying across the threshold of the door, two paces from Juana, heard nothing, and saw nothing, for the blinding gleam of the dagger blade.

"Then he meant to deceive me"; the words came slowly from Juana. "He told me that he was free."

"He told me that he was a married man," said Perez, in the same stern tones as before.

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Doña Lagounia. La Marana stooped to mutter in the ear of the Marquis, "Answer me, will you, soul of mud?"

"Your daughter . . ." Montefiore began.

"The daughter I once had is dead, or she soon will be," said La Marana. "I have no daughter now. Do not use that word again. Answer me, are you married?"

"No, madame," Montefiore said at last (he wished to gain time); "I mean to marry your daughter."

"My noble Montefiore!" cried Juana, with a deep breath.

"Then what made you fly and call for help?" demanded Perez.

Terrible perspicacity!

Juana said nothing, but she wrung her hands, went over to her armchair, and sat down. Even at that moment there was an uproar in the street, and in the deep silence that fell upon the parlor it was sufficiently easy to catch the sounds. A private soldier of the Sixth, who had chanced to pass along the street when Montefiore cried out for help, had gone to call up Diard. Luckily, the quartermaster was in his lodging, and came at once with several comrades.

"Why did I fly?" repeated Montefiore, who heard the sound of his friend's voice. "Because I had told you the truth.—Diard! Diard!" he shrieked aloud.

But at a word from Perez, who meant that all in his house should share in the murder, the apprentice made the door fast, and the men were obliged to force it open. La Marana, therefore, could stab the guilty creature at her feet before they made an entrance; but her hand shook with pent-up wrath, and the blade slipped aside upon Montefiore's

epaulette. Yet so heavy had been the blow, that the Italian rolled over almost at Juana's feet. The girl did not see him, but La Marana sprang upon her prey, and, lest she should fail this time, she held his throat in an iron grasp, and pointed the dagger at his heart.

"I am free!" he gasped. "I will marry her! I swear it by God! by my mother! by all that is most sacred in this world. . . . I am not married! I will marry her! Upon my word of honor, I will!" and he set his teeth in the courtesan's arm.

"That is enough, mother," said Juana; "kill him! I would not have such a coward for my husband if he were ten times more beautiful."

"Ah! that is my daughter!" cried La Marana.

"What is going on here?" asked the quartermaster, looking about him.

"This," shouted Montefiore; "they are murdering me on that girl's account; she says that I am her lover; she trapped me, and now they want to force me to marry her against my will——"

"Against your will?" cried Diard, struck with the sublime beauty that indignation, scorn, and hate had lent to Juana's face, already so fair. "You are very hard to please! If she must have a husband, here am I. Put up your dagger."

La Marana grasped the Italian, pulled him to his feet, brought him to the bedside, and said in his ear—

"If I spare your life, you may thank that last speech of yours for it. But keep it in mind. If you say a word against my daughter, we shall see each other again.—What will her dowry amount to?" she asked of Perez.

"Two hundred thousand piastres down——"

"That will not be all, monsieur," said the courtesan, addressing Diard. "Who are you?—You can go," she added, turning to Montefiore.

But when the Marquis heard mention of two hundred thousand piastres down, he came forward, saying, "I am really quite free——"

"You are really quite free to go," said La Marana, and the Italian went.

"Alas! monsieur," the girl spoke, addressing Diard; "I thank you, and I admire you. But my bridegroom is in heaven; I shall be the bride of Christ. To-morrow I shall enter the convent of——"

"Oh, hush! hush! Juana, my Juana!" cried her mother, holding the girl tightly in her arms. Then she whispered, "You must take another bridegroom."

Juana turned pale.

"Who are you, monsieur?" asked the mother of the Provençal.

"I am nothing as yet but a quartermaster in the Sixth Regiment of the line," said he; "but for such a wife, a man would feel that it lay in him to be a Marshal of France some day. My name is Pierre-François Diard. My father was a guild magistrate, so I am not a——"

"Eh! you are an honest man, are you not?" cried La Marana. "If the Signorina Juana dei Mancini cares for you, you may both be happy.—Juana," she went on gravely, "when you are the wife of a good and worthy man, remember that you will be a mother. I have sworn that you shall set a kiss upon your child's forehead without a blush . . ." (Here her tone changed somewhat.) "I

have sworn that you shall be a virtuous wife. So in this life, though many troubles await you, whatever happens to you, be a chaste and faithful wife to your husband; sacrifice everything to him; he will be the father of your children. . . . A father to your children! . . . Stay, between you and a lover your mother always will stand; I shall be your mother only when danger threatens. . . . Do you see Perez's dagger? *That* is part of your dower," and she flung the weapon down on the bed. "There I leave it as a guarantee of your honor, so long as I have eyes to see and hands that can strike a blow.—Farewell," she said, keeping back the tears; "Heaven send that we never meet again," and at that her tears flowed fast.

"Poor child! you have been very happy in this little cell, happier than you know.—Act in such a sort that she may never look back on it with regret," she added, looking at her future son-in-law.

The story, which has been given simply by way of introduction, is not by any means the subject of the following study; it has been told to explain, in the first place, how Montefiore and Diard became acquainted, how Captain Diard came to marry Juana dei Mancini, and to make known what passions filled Mme. Diard's heart, what blood flowed in her veins.

By the time that the quartermaster had been through the slow and tedious formalities indispensable for a French soldier who is obtaining leave to marry, he had fallen passionately in love with Juana dei Mancini, and Juana dei Mancini had had time to reflect on her fate. An appalling fate! Juana, who neither loved nor esteemed this Diard, was none the less bound to him by a promise, a rash promise no doubt, but there had been no help for it. The Provençal was neither handsome nor well made. His manners were totally lacking in distinction, and savored of the camp, of his provincial bringing up and imperfect education. How should the young girl love Diard? With her perfect elegance and grace, her unconquerable instinct for luxury and refinement, her natural drawings were towards the higher spheres of society; and as for esteem, she could not bring herself to feel so much as esteem for this Diard who was to marry her, and precisely for that very reason.

The repugnance was very natural. Woman is a sacred and gracious being, almost always misunderstood; the judgments passed upon her are almost always unjust, because she is not understood. If Juana had loved Diard, she would have esteemed him. Love creates a new self within a woman; the old self passes away with the dawn of love, and in the wedding-robe of a passion that shall last as long as life itself, her life is invested with whiteness and purity. After this new birth, this revival of modesty and virtue, she has no longer a past; it is utterly forgotten; she turns wholly to the future that she may learn all things afresh. In this sense, the words of the famous line that a modern poet has put into the mouth of Marion Delorme, a line moreover that Corneille might well have written, are steeped in truth—

"And Love gives back my maidenhood to me."

Does it not read like a reminiscence of some tragedy of Corneille's? The style of the father of French drama, so forceful, owing so little to epithet, seems to be revived again in the words. And yet the writer, the poet of our own day, has been compelled to sacrifice it to the taste of a public only capable of appreciating vaudevilles.

So Juana, loveless, was still the same Juana, betrayed, humiliated, brought very low. How should this Juana respect a man who could take her thus? With the high-minded purity of youth, she felt the force of a distinction, subtle in appearance, but real and immutable, a binding law upon the heart, which even the least thoughtful women instinctively apply to all their sentiments. Life had opened out before Juana, and the prospect saddened her inmost soul.

Often she looked at Perez and Doña Lagounia, her eyes full of the tears she was too proud to let fall; they understood the bitter thoughts contained in those tears, but they said no word. Were not reproaches useless? And why should they seek to comfort her? The keener the sympathy, the wider the pent-up sorrow would spread.

One evening, as Juana sat in her little cell in a dull stupor of wretchedness, she heard the husband and wife talking together. They thought that the door was shut, and a wail broke from her adopted mother.

"The poor child will die of grief!"

"Yes," answered Perez in a faltering voice; "but what can we do? Can I go now to boast of my ward's chaste beauty to the Comte de'Arcos, to whom I hoped to marry her?"

"There is a difference between one slip and vice," said the old woman, indulgent as an angel could have been.

"Her mother gave her to him," objected Perez.

"All in a minute, and without consulting her!" cried Doña Lagounia.

"She knew quite well what she was doing——"

"Into what hands our pearl will pass!"

"Not a word more, or I will go and pick a quarrel with that——Diard!"

"And then there would be one more misfortune."

Juana, listening to these terrible words, knew at last the value of the happy life that had flowed on untroubled until her error ended it. So the innocent hours in her peaceful retreat were to have been crowned by a brilliant and splendid existence; the delights so often dreamed of would have been hers. Those dreams had caused her ruin. She had fallen from the heights of social greatness to the feet of *Monsieur* Diard! Juana wept; her thoughts almost drove her mad. For several seconds she hesitated between a life of vice and religion. Vice offered a prompt solution; religion, a life made up of suffering. The inward debate was stormy and solemn. To-morrow was the fatal day, the day fixed for this marriage. It was not too late; Juana might be Juana still. If she remained free, she knew the utmost extent of her calamities; but when married, she could not tell what might lie in store for her. Religion gained the day. Doña Lagounia came to watch and pray by her daughter's side, as she might have done by a dying woman's bed.

"It is the will of God," she said to Juana. Nature gives to a woman a power peculiarly her own, that enables

her to endure suffering, a power succeeded in turn by weakness that counsels resignation. Juana submitted without an after-thought. She determined to fulfill her mother's vow, to cross the desert of life, and so reach heaven, knowing that no flowers could spring in the thorny paths that lay before her. She married Diard.

As for the quartermaster, though Juana judged him pitilessly, who else would not have forgiven him? He was intoxicated with love. La Marana, with the quick instinct natural to her, had felt passion in the tones of his voice, and seen in him the abrupt temper, the impulsive generosity of the South. In the paroxysm of her great anger, she had seen Diard's good qualities, and these only, and thought that these were sufficient guarantees for her daughter's happiness.

And to all appearance the early days of this marriage were happy. But to lay bare the underlying facts of the case, the miserable secrets that women bury in the depths of their souls, Juana had determined that she would not overcloud her husband's joy. All women who are victims of an ill-assorted marriage, come sooner or later to play a double part—a part terrible to play, and Juana had already taken up her rôle. Of such a life, a man can only record the facts; and women's hearts alone can divine the inner life of sentiments. Is it not a story impossible to relate in all its truth? Juana, struggling every hour against her own nature, half Spanish, half Italian; Juana, shedding tears in secret till she had no tears left to shed, was a typical creation, a living symbol, destined to represent the uttermost extent of woman's misfortunes. The minute detail requried to depict that life of restless pain would be without interest for those who crave melodramatic sensation. And would not an analysis, in which every wife would discover some of her own experience, require an entire volume if it were to be given in full? Such a book, by its very nature, would be impossible to write, for its merits must consist in half-tones and in subtle shades of color that critics would consider vague and indistinct. And besides, who that does not bear another heart within his heart can touch on the pathetic, deeply-hidden tragedies that some women take with them to their graves; the heart-ache, understood of none—not even of those who cause it; the sighs in vain; the devotion that, here on earth at least, meets with no return; unappreciated magnanimities of silence and scorn of vengeance; unfailing generosity, lavished in vain; longings for happiness destined to be unfulfilled; angelic charity that blesses in secret; all the beliefs held sacred, all the inextinguishable love? This life Juana knew; fate spared her in nothing. Hers was to be in all things the lot of a wronged and unhappy wife, always forgiving her wrongs; a woman pure as a flawless diamond, though through her beauty, as flawless and as dazzling as the diamond, a way of revenge lay open to her. Of a truth, she need not dread the dagger in her dower.

But at first, under the influence of love, of a passion that for a while at least can work a change in the most depraved nature, and bring to light all that is noblest in a human soul, Diard behaved like a man of honor. He compelled Montefiore to go out of the regiment, and even out of that division of

the army, that his wife might not be compelled to meet the Marquis during the short time that she was to remain in Spain. Then the quartermaster asked to change his regiment, and managed to exchange into the Imperial Guard. He meant at all costs to gain a title; he would have honors and a great position to match his great fortune. With this thought in his mind, he displayed great courage in one of our bloodiest battles in Germany, and was so badly wounded that he could no longer stay in the service. For a time it was feared that he might have to lose his leg, and he was forced to retire, with his pension indeed, but without the title of baron or any of the rewards which he had hoped for, and very likely would have won, if his name had not been Diard.

These events, together with his wound and his disappointed hopes, made a changed man of the late quartermaster. The Provençal's energy, wrought for a time to a fever pitch, suddenly deserted him. At first, however, his wife sustained his courage; his efforts, his bravery; and his ambition had given her some belief in her husband; and surely it behooved her, of all women, to play a woman's part, to be a tender consoler for the troubles of life.

Juana's words put fresh heart into the major. He went to live in Paris, determined to make a high position for himself in the Administration; the quartermaster of the Sixth Line Regiment should be forgotten, and some day Mme. Diard should wear a splendid title. His passion for his charming wife had made him quick to guess her inmost wishes. Juana did not speak of them, but he understood her; he was not loved as a man dreams of being loved—he knew it, and longed to be looked up to and loved and caressed. The luckless man anticipated happiness with a wife who was at all times so submissive and so gentle; but her gentleness and her submission meant nothing but that resignation to her fate which had given Juana to him. Resignation and religion, were these love? Diard could often have wished for a refusal instead of that wifely obedience; often he would have given his soul if Juana would but have deigned to weep upon his breast, and ceased to conceal her feelings with the smile that she wore proudly as a mask upon her face.

Many a man in his youth (for after a certain time we give up struggling) strives to triumph over an evil destiny that brings the thunder-clouds from time to time above the horizon of his life; and when he falls into the depths of misfortune, those unrequited struggles should be taken into account. Like many another, Diard tried all ways, and found all ways barred against him. His wealth enabled him to surround his wife with all the luxuries that can be enjoyed in Paris. She had a great mansion and vast drawing-rooms, and presided over one of those houses frequented by some few artists who are uncritical by nature, by a great many schemers, by the frivolous folk who are ready to go anywhere to be amused, and by certain men of fashion, attracted by Juana's beauty. Those who make themselves conspicuous in Paris must either conquer Paris or fall victims. Diard's character was not strong enough, nor compact enough, nor persistent enough, to impress itself upon the society of a time when everyone else

was likewise bent upon reaching a high position. Ready-made social classifications are not improbably a great blessing, even for the people. Napoleon's *Memoirs* have informed us of the pains he was at to impose social conventions upon a Court composed for the most part of subjects who had once been his equals. But Napoleon was a Corsican, Diard was a Provençal.

If the two men had been mentally equal—an islander is always a more complete human being than a man born and bred on the mainland; and though Provence and Corsica lie between the same degrees of latitude, the narrow stretch of sea that keeps them apart is, in spite of man's inventions, a whole ocean that makes two different countries of them both.

From this false position, which Diard falsified yet further, grave misfortunes arose. Perhaps there is a useful lesson to be learned by tracing the chain of interdependent facts that imperceptibly brought about the catastrophe of the story.

In the first place, Parisian scoffers could not see the pictures that adorned the late quartermaster's mansion without a significant smile. The recently purchased masterpieces were all condemned by the unspoken slur cast upon the pictures that had been the spoils of war in Spain; by this slur, self-love avenged tiself for the involuntary offense of Diard's wealth. Juana understood the meaning of some of the ambiguous compliments in which the French excel. Acting upon her advice, therefore, her husband sent the Spanish pictures back to Taragona. But the world of Paris, determined to put the worst construction on the matter, said, "That fellow Diard is shrewd; he has sold his pictures," and the good folk continued to believe that the paintings which still hung on the walls had not been honestly come by. Then some ill-natured woman inquired how a *Diard* had come to marry a young wife so rich and so beautiful. Comments followed, endless absurdities were retailed, after the manner of Paris. If Juana rose above it all, even above the scandal, and met with nothing but the respect due to her pure and devout life, that respect ended with her, and was not accorded to her husband. Her shining eyes glanced over her rooms, and her woman's clear-sightedness brought her nothing but pain. And yet—the disparagement was quite explicable. Military men, for all the virtues with which romance endows them, could not forgive the quondam quartermaster for his wealth and his determination to cut a figure in Paris, and for that very reason.

There is a world in Paris that lies between the furthest house in the Faubourg Saint-Germain on the one hand, and the last mansion in the Rue Saint-Lazare on the other; between the rising ground of the Luxembourg and the heights of Montmartre; a world that dresses and gossips, dresses to go out, and goes out to gossip; a world of petty and great airs; a world of mean and poor ambitions, masquerading in insolence; a world of envy and of fawning arts. It is made up of gilded rank, and rank that has lost its gilding, of young and old, of nobility of the fourth century and titles of yesterday, of those who laugh at the expense of a parvenu, and others who fear to be contaminated by him, of men eager for the downfall of a power,

though none the less they will bow the knee to it if it holds its own; and all these ears hear, and all these tongues repeat, and all these minds are informed in the course of an evening of the birthplace, education, and previous history of each new aspirant for its high places. If there is no High Court of Justice in this exalted sphere, it boasts the most ruthless of *procureurs-généraux,* an intangible public opinion that dooms the victim and carries out the sentence, that accuses and brands the delinquent. Do not hope to hide anything from this tribunal, tell everything at once yourself, for it is determined to go to the bottom of everything, and knows everything. Do not seek to understand the mysterious operation by which intelligence is flashed from place to place, so that a story, a scandal, or a piece of news is known everywhere simultaneously in the twinkling of an eye. Do not ask who set the machinery in motion; it is a social mystery, no observer can do more than watch its phenomena, and its working is rapid beyond belief. A single example shall suffice. The murder of the Duc de Berri, at the Opéra, was known in the furthest part of the Ile Saint-Louis ten minutes after the crime was committed. The opinion of the Sixth Regiment of the Line concerning Diard permeated this world of Paris on the very evening of his first ball.

So Diard himself could accomplish nothing. Henceforward his wife, and his wife alone, might make a way for him. Strange portent of a strange civilization! If a man can do nothing by himself in Paris, he has still some chance of rising in the world if his wife is young and clever. There are women, weak to all appearance, invalids who, without rising from their sofas or leaving their rooms, make their influence felt in society; and by bringing countless secret springs into play, gain for their husbands the position which their own vanity desires. But Juana, whose girlhood had been spent in the quaint simplicity of the narrow house in Taragona, knew nothing of the corruption, the baseness, or the opportunities afforded by life in Paris; she looked out upon it with girlish curiosity, and learned from it no worldly wisdom save the lessons taught her by her wounded pride and susceptibilities. Juana, moreover, possessed the quick instinct of a maiden heart, and was as swift to anticipate an impression as a sensitive plant. The lonely girl had become a woman all at once. She saw that if she endeavored to compel society to honor her husband, it must be after the Spanish fashion, of telling a lie, carbine in hand. Did not her own constant watchfulness tell her how necessary her manifold precautions were? A gulf yawned for Diard retween the failure to make himself respected and the opposite danger of being respected but too much. Then as suddenly as before, when she had foreseen her life, there came a revelation of the world to her; she beheld on all sides the vast extent of an irreparable misfortune. Then came the tardy recognition of her husband's peculiar weaknesses, his total unfitness to play the parts he had assigned to himself, the incoherency of his ideas, the mental incapacity to grasp this society as a whole, or to comprehend the subtleties that are all-important there. Would not tact effect more for a man in his position than force of character?

But the tact that never fails is perhaps the greatest of all forces.

So far from effacing the blot upon the Diard scutcheon, the major was at no little pains to make matters worse. For instance, as it had not occurred to him that the Empire was passing through a phase that required careful study, he tried, though he was only a major, to obtain an appointment as prefect. At that time almost everyone believed in Napoleon; his favor had increased the importance of every post. The prefectures, those empires on a small scale, could only be filled by men with great names, by the gentlemen of the household of his Majesty the Emperor and King. The prefects by this time were Grand Viziers. These minions of the great man laughed at Major Diard's artless ambitions, and he was fain to solicit a sub-prefecture. His modest pretensions were ludicrously disproportioned to his vast wealth. After this ostentatious display of luxury, how could the millionaire leave the royal splendors of his house in Paris for Issoudun or Savenay? Would it not be a descent unworthy of his fortunes? Juana, who all too late had come to understand our laws, and the manners and customs of our administration, too late enlightened her husband. Dirard, in his desperation, went begging to all the powers that be; but Diard met with nothing but rebuffs, no way was open to him. Then people judged him as the Government had judged him, and passed his own verdict upon himself. Diard had been badly wounded on the field of battle, and Diard had not been decorated. The quartermaster, who had gained wealth, but no esteem, found no place under the Government, and society quite logically refused him the social position to which he had aspired. In short, in his own house the unfortunate man continually felt that his wife was his superior. He had come to feel it in spite of the "valvet glove" (if the metaphor is not too bold) that disguised from her husband the supremacy that astonished her herself, while she felt humiliated by it. It produced its effect upon Diard at last.

A man who plays a losing game like this is bound to lose heart, and to grow either a greater or a worse man for it; Diard's courage, or his passion, was sure to diminish, after repeated blows dealt to his self-love, and he made mistake upon mistake. From the first everything had been against him, even his own habits and his own character. The vices and virtues of the impulsive Provençal were equally patent. The fibers of his nature were like harp-strings, and every old friend had a place in his heart. He was as prompt to relieve a comrade in abject poverty as the distress of another of high rank; in short, he never forgot a friend, and filled his gilded rooms with poor wretches down on their luck. Beholding which things, the general of the old stamp (a species that will soon be extinct) was apt to greet Diard in an offhand fashion, and address him with a patronizing, "Well, my dear fellow!" when they met. If the generals of the Empire concealed their insolence beneath an assumption of a soldier's bluff familiarity, the few people of fashion whom Diard met showed him the polite and well-bred contempt against which a self-made man is nearly always powerless. Diard's behavior and speech, like his half-Italian accent, his dress, and

everything about him, combined to lower him in the eyes of ordinary minds; for the unwritten code of good manners and good taste is a binding tradition that only the greatest power can shake off. Such is the way of the world.

These details give a very imperfect idea of Juana's martyrdom. The pangs were endured one by one. Every social species contributed its pin-prick, and hers was a soul that would have welcomed dagger-thrusts in preference. It was intolerably painful to watch Diard receiving insults that he did not feel, insults that Juana must feel though they were not meant for her. A final and dreadful illumination came at last for her; it cast a light upon the future, and she knew all the sorrows that it held in store. She had seen already that her husband was quite incapable of mounting to the highest rungs of the social ladder, but now she saw the inevitable depths to which he must fall when he should lose heart; and then a feeling of pity for Diard came over her.

The future that lay before her was very dark. Juana had never ceased to feel an overhanging dread of some evil, though whence it should come she knew not. This presentiment haunted her inmost soul, as contagion hovers in the air; but she was unable to hide her anguish with smiles. She had reached the point when she no longer thought of herself.

Juana used her influence to persuade Diard to renounce his social ambitions, pointing out to him as a refuge the peaceful and gracious life of the domestic hearth. All their troubles came from without: why should they not shut out the world? In his own home Diard would find peace and respect; he should reign there. She felt that she had courage enough to undertake the trying task of making him happy, this man dissatisfied with himself. Her energy had increased with the difficulties of her life; she had within her the heroic spirit needed by a woman in her position, and felt the stirrings of those religious aspirations which are cherished by the guardian angel appointed to watch over a Christian soul, for this poetic superstitious fancy is an allegory that expresses the idea of the two natures within us.

Diard renounced his ambitions, closed his house, and literally shut himself up in it, if it is allowable to make use of so familiar a phrase. But therein lay the danger. Diard was one of those centrifugal souls who must always be moving about. The luckless soldier's turn of mind was such that no sooner had he arrived in a place than this restless instinct forthwith drove him to depart. Natures of this kind have but one end in life; they must come and go unceasingly like the wheels spoken of in the Scriptures. It may have been that Diard would fain have escaped from himself. He was not weary of Juana; she had given him no cause to blame her, but with possession his passion for her had grown less absorbing, and his character asserted itself again.

Thenceforward his moments of despondency came more frequently; he gave way more often to his quick Southern temper. The more virtuous and irreproachable a woman is, the more a man delights to find her in fault, if only to demonstrate his titular su-

periority; but if by chance she compels his respect, he must needs fabricate faults, and so between the husband and wife nothings are exaggerated and trifles become mountains. But Juana's meek patience and gentleness, untinged with the bitterness that women can infuse into their submission, gave no handle to this fault-finding of set purpose, the most unkind of all. Hers was, moreover, one of those noble natures for whom it is impossible to fail in duty; her pure and holy life shone in those eyes with the martyr's expression in them that haunted the imagination. Diard first grew weary, then he chafed, and ended by finding this lofty virtue an intolerable yoke. His wife's discretion left him no room for violent sensations, and he craved excitement. Thousands of such dramas lie hidden away in the souls of men and women, beneath the uninteresting surface of apparently simple and commonplace lives. It is difficult to choose an example from among the many scenes that last for so short a time, and leave such ineffaceable traces in a life; scenes that are almost always precursors of the calamity that is written in the destiny of most marriages. Still the scene may be described, because it sharply marks the first beginnings of a misunderstanding between these two, and may in some degree explain the catastrophe of the story.

Juana had two children; luckily for her, they were both boys. The oldest was born seven months after her marriage; he was named Juan, and was like his mother. Two years after they came to Paris her second son was born; he resembled Diard and Juana, but he was more like Diard, whose names he bore. Juana had given the most tender care to little Farncisco. For the five years of his life, his mother was absorbed in this child; he had more than his share of kisses and caresses and playthings; and besides and beyond all this, his mother's penetrating eyes watched him continually. Juana studied his character even in the cradle, noticing heedfully his cries and movements, that she might direct his education. Juana seemed to have but that one child. The Provençal, seeing that Juan was almost neglected, began to take notice of the older boy. He would not ask himself whether the little one was the offspring of the short-lived love affair to which he owed Juana, and by a piece of rare flattery made of Juan his Benjamin. Of all the race inheritance of passions which preyed upon her, Mme. Diard gave way but to one—a mother's love; she loved her children with the same vehemence and intensity that La Marana had shown for her child in the first part of this story; but to this love she added a gracious delicacy of feeling, a quick and keen comprehension of the social virtues that it had been her pride to practice, in which she had found her recompense. The secret thought of the conscientious fulfillment of the duties of motherhood had been a crude element of poetry that left its impress on La Marana's life; but Juana could be a mother openly, it was her hourly consolation. Her own mother had been virtuous as other women are criminal, by stealth; she had stolen her illicit happiness, she had not known all the sweetness of secure possession. But Juana, whose life of virtue was as dreary as her mother's

life of sin, knew every hour the ineffable joys for which that mother had longed in vain. For her, as for La Marana, motherhood summed up all earthly affection, and both the Maranas from opposite causes had but this one comfort in their desolation. Perhaps Juana's love was the stronger, because, shut out from all other love, her children became all in all to her, and because a noble passion has this in common with vice: it grows by what it feeds upon. The mother and the gambler are alike insatiable.

Juana was touched by the generous pardon extended over Juan's head by Diard's fatherly affection, and thenceforward the relations between husband and wife were changed; the interest which Diard's Spanish wife had taken in him from a sense of duty only, became a deep and sincere feeling. Had he been less inconsequent in his life, if fickleness and spasmodic changes of feeling on his part had not quenched that flicker of timid but real sympathy, Juana must surely have loved him; but, unluckily, Diard's character belonged to the quick-witted Southern type, that has no continuity in its ideas; such men will be capable of heroic actions over night, and sink into nonentities on the morrow; often they are made to suffer for their virtues, often their worst defects contribute to their success; and for the rest, they are great when their good qualities are pressed into the service of an unflagging will. For two years Diard had been a prisoner in his home, a prisoner bound by the sweetest of all chains. He lived, almost against his will, beneath the influence of a wife who kept him amused, and was always bright and cheerful for him, a wife who devoted all her powers of coquetry to beguiling him into the ways of virtue; and yet all her ingenuity could not deceive him, and he knew this was not love.

Just about that time a murder caused a great sensation in Paris. A captain of the armies of the Republic had killed a woman in a paroxysm of debauchery. Diard told the story to Juana when he came home to dine. The officer, he said, had taken his own life to avoid the ignominy of a trial and the infamous death of a criminal. At first Juana could not understand the reason for his conduct, and her husband was obliged to explain to her the admirable, provision of the French law, which takes no proceedings against the dead.

"But, papa, didn't you tell us the other day that the King can pardon anybody?" asked Francisco.

"The King can only grant *life*," said Juan, nettled.

Diard and Juana watched this little scene with very different feelings. The tears of happiness in Juana's eyes as she glanced at her oldest boy let her husband see with fatal clearness into the real secrets of that hitherto inscrutable heart. Her older boy was Juana's own child; Juana knew his nature; she was sure of him and of his future; she worshiped him, and her great love was a secret known only to her child and to God. Juan, in his secret heart, gladly endured his mother's sharp speeches. What if she seemed to frown upon him in the presence of his father and brother, when she showered passionate kisses upon him when they were alone? Francisco was Diard's child, and Juana's care

meant that she wished to check the growth of his father's faults in him, and to develop his good qualities.

Juana, unconscious that she had spoken too plainly in that glance, took little Francisco on her knee; and, her sweet voice faltering somewhat with the gladness that Juan's answer had caused her, gave the younger boy the teaching suited to his childish mind.

"His training requires great care," the father said, speaking to Juana.

"Yes," she answered simply.

"But *Juan!*"

The tone in which the two words were uttered startled Mme. Diard. She looked up at her husband.

"Juan was born perfection," he added, and having thus delivered himself, he sat down, and looked gloomily at his wife. She was silent, so he went on, "You love one of *your* children more than the other."

"You know it quite well," she said.

"No!" returned Diard. "Until this moment I did not know which of them you loved the most."

"But neither of them has as yet caused me any sorrow," she answered quickly.

"No, but which of them has given you more joys?" he asked still more quickly.

"I have not kept any reckoning of them."

"Women are very deceitful!" cried Diard. "Do you dare to tell me that Juan is not the darling of your heart?"

"And if he were," she said, with gentle dignity, "do you mean that it would be a misfortune?"

"You have never loved me! If you had chosen, I might have won kingdoms for you with my sword. You know all that I have tried to do, sustained by one thought—a longing that you might care fore me. Ah! if you had but loved me——"

"A woman who loves," said Juana, "lives in solitude far from the world. Is not that what we are doing?"

"Oh! I know, Juana, that you are never in the wrong."

The words, spoken with such intense bitterness, brought about a coolness between them that lasted the rest of their lives.

On the morrow of that fatal day, Diard sought out one of his old cronies, and with him sought distraction at the gaming-table. Unluckily, he won a great deal of money, and he began to play regularly. Little by little he slipped back into his old dissipated life. After a short time he no longer dined at home. A few months were spent in the enjoyment of the first pleasure of freedom; he made up his mind that he would not part with it, left the large apartments of the house to his wife, and took up his abode separately on the entresol. By the end of the year Diard and Juana only met once a day—at breakfast time.

In a few words, like all gamblers, he had runs of good and bad luck; but as he was reluctant to touch his capital, he wished to have entire control of their income, and his wife accordingly ceased to take any part in the management of the household economy. Mistrust had succeeded to the boundless confidence that he had once placed in her. As to money matters, which had formerly been arranged by both husband and wife, he adopted the plan of a monthly allowance for her own ex-

penses; they settled the amount of it together in the last of the confidential talks that form one of the most attractive charms of marriage.

The barrier of silence between two hearts is a real divorce, accomplished on the day when husband and wife say *we* no longer. When that day came, Juana knew that she was no longer a wife, but a mother; she was not unhappy, and did not seek to guess the reason of the misfortune. It was a great pity. Children consolidate, as it were, the lives of their parents, and the life that her husband led apart was to weave sadness and anguish for others as well as for Juana. Diard lost no time in making use of his newly regained liberty; he played high, and lost and won enormous sums. He was a good and bold player, and gained a great reputation. The respect which he had failed to win in society in the days of the Empire was accorded now to the wealth that was risked upon a green table, to a talent for all and any of the games of chance of that period. Ambassadors, financiers, men with large fortunes, jaded pleasure-seekers in quest of excitement and extreme sensations, admired Diard's play at their clubs; they rarely asked him to their houses, but they all played with him. Diard became the fashion. Once or twice during the winter his independent spirit led him to give a fête to return the courtesies that he had received, and by glimpses Juana saw something of society again; there was a brief return of balls and banquets, of luxury and brilliantly-lighted rooms; but all these things she regarded as a sort of duty levied upon her happiness and solitude.

The queen of these high festivals appeared in them like some creature fallen from an unknown world. Her simplicity that nothing had spoiled, a certain maidenliness of soul with which the changed conditions of her life had invested her, her beauty, her unaffected modesty, won sincere admiration. But Juana saw few women among her guests; and it was plain to her mind that if her husband had ordered his life differently without taking her into confidence, he had not risen in the esteem of the world.

Diard was not always lucky. In three years he had squandered three-fourths of his fortune; but he drew from his passion for gambling sufficient energy to satisfy it. He had a large circle of acquaintance, and was hand and glove with certain swindlers on the Stock Exchange—gentry who, since the Revolution, have established the principle that robbery on a large scale is a mere peccadillo, transferring to the language of the counting-house the brazen epithets of the licence of the eighteenth century.

Diard became a speculator, engaged in the peculiar kinds of business described as "shady" in the slang of the Palais. He managed to get hold of poor wretches ignorant of commercial red-tape, and weary of everlasting proceedings in liquidation; he would buy up their claims on the debtor's estate for a small sum, arrange the matter with the assignees in the course of an evening, and divide the spoil with the latter. When liquefiable debts were not to be found, he looked out for floating debts; he unearthed and revived claims in abeyance in Europe and America and

uncivilized countries. When at the Restoration the debts incurred by the princes, the Republic, and the Empire were all paid, he took commissions on loans, on contracts for public works, and enterprises of all kinds. In short, he committed legal robbery, like many another carefully masked delinquent behind the scenes in the theater of politics. Such thefts, if perpetrated by the light of a street lamp, would send the luckless offender to the hulks; but there is a virtue in the glitter of chandeliers and gilded ceilings that absolves the crimes committed beneath them.

Diard forestalled and regrated sugars; he sold places; to him belongs the credit of the invention of the *warming-pan;* he installed lay-figures in lucrative posts that must be held for a time to secure still better positions. Then he fell to mediating on bounties; he studied the loopholes of the law, and carried on contraband trades against which no provision had been made. This traffic in high places may be briefly described as a sort of commission agency; he received "so much per cent." on the purchase of fifteen votes which passed in a single night from the benches on the left to the benches on the right of the legislative chamber. In these days such things are neither misdemeanors nor felony; exploiting industry, the art of government, financial genius—these are the names by which they are called.

Public opinion put Diard in the pillory, where more than one clever man stood already to keep him company; there, indeed, you will find the aristocracy of this kind of talent—the Upper Chamber of civilized rascality.

Diard, therefore, was no commonplace gambler, no vulgar spendthrift who ends his career, in melodramas, as a beggar. Above a certain social altitude that kind of gambler is not to be found. In these days a bold scoundrel of this kind will die gloriously in the harness of vice in all the trappings of success: he will blow out his brains in a coach and six, and all that has been intrusted to him vanishes with him. Diard's talent determined him not to buy remorse too cheaply, and he joined this privileged class. He learned all the springs of government, made himself acquainted with all the secrets and the weaknesses of men in office, and held his own in the fiery furnace into which he had cast himself.

Mme. Diard knew nothing of the infernal life that her husband led. She was well content to be neglected, and did not ponder overmuch the reasons for his neglect. Her time was too well filled. She devoted all the money that she had to the education of her children; a very clever tutor was engaged for them, besides various masters. She meant to make men of her boys, to develop in them the faculty of reasoning clearly, but not at the expense of their imaginative powers. Nothing affected her now save through her children, and her own colorless life depressed her no longer. Juan and Francisco were for her what children are for a time for many mothers—a sort of expansion of her own existence. Diard had come to be a mere accident in her life. Since Diard had ceased to be a father and the head of the family, nothing bound Juana to her husband any longer, save a regard for appearances demanded by social conventions; yet she brought up

her children to respect their father, shadowly and unreal as that fatherhood had become; indeed, her husband's continual absence from home helped her to maintain the fiction of his high character. If Diard had lived in the house, all Juana's efforts must have been in vain. Her children were too quick and bright not to judge their father, and this process is a moral parricide.

At length, however, Juana's indifference changed to a feeling of dread. She felt that sooner or later her husband's manner of life must affect the children's future. Day by day that old presentiment of coming evil gathered definiteness and strength. On the rare occasions when Juana saw her husband, she would glance at his hollow cheeks, at his face grown haggard with the vigils he kept, and wrinkled with violent emotions; and Diard almost trembled before the clear, penetrating eyes. At such times her husband's assumed gayety alarmed her even more than the dark look that his face wore in repose, when for a moment he happened to forget the part that he was playing. He feared his wife as the criminal fears the headsman. Juana saw in him a disgrace on her children's name; and Diard dreaded her, she was like some passionless Vengeance, a Justice with unchanging brows, with the arm that should one day strike always suspended above him.

One day, about fifteen years after his marriage, Diard found himself without resources. He owed a hundred thousand crowns, and was possessed of a bare hundred thousand francs. His mansion (all that he possessed beside ready money) was mortgaged beyond its value. A few more days, and the prestige of enormous wealth must fade; and when those days of grace had expired, no helping hand would be stretched out, no purse would be open for him. Nothing but unlooked-for luck could save him now from the slough into which he must fall; and he would but sink the deeper in it, men would scorn him the more because for awhile they had estimated him at more than his just value.

Very opportunely, therefore, he learned that with the beginning of the season diplomatists and foreigners of distinction flocked to watering-places in the Pyrenees, that play ran high at these resorts, and that the visitors were doubtless well able to pay their losings. So he determined to set out at once for the Pyrenees. He had no mind to leave his wife in Paris; some of his creditors might enlighten her as to his awkward position, and he wished to keep it secret, so he took Juana and the two children. He would not allow the tutor to go with them, and made some difficulties about Juana's maid, who, with a single man-servant, composed their traveling suite. His tone was curt and peremptory; his energy seemed to have returned to him. This hasty journey sent a shiver of dread to Juana's soul; her penetration was at fault, she could not imagine the why and wherefore of their leaving Paris. Her husband seemed to be in high spirits on the way; and during the time spent together perforce in the traveling carriage, he took more and more notice of the children, and was more kindly to the children's mother. And yet—every day brought new and dark forebodings for Juana, the forebodings of a mother's

heart. These inward warnings, even when there is no apparent reason for them, are seldom vain, and the veil that hides the future grows thin for a mother's eyes.

Diard took a house, not large, but very nicely furnished, situated in one of the quietest parts of Bordeaux. It happened to be a corner house with a large garden, surrounded on three sides by streets, and on the fourth by the wall of a neighboring dwelling. Diard paid the rent in advance, and installed his wife and family, leaving Juana fifty louis, a sum barely sufficient to meet the housekeeping expenses for three months. Mme. Diard made no comment on this unwonted niggardliness. When her husband told her that he was about to go to the Baths, and that she was to remain in Bordeaux, she made up her mind that her children should learn the Spanish and Italian languages thoroughly, and that they should read with her the great masterpieces of either tongue.

With this object in view, Juana's life should be retired and simple, and in consequence her expenses would be few. Her own woman waited upon them; and, to simplify the housekeeping, she arranged on the morrow of Diard's departure to have their meals sent in from a restaurant. Everything was provided for until her husband's return, and she had no money left. Her amusements must consist in occasional walks with the children. She was now a woman of thirty-three; her beauty had developed to its fullest extent, she was in the full splendor of her maturity. Scarcely had she appeared in Bordeaux before people talked of nothing but the lovely Spanish lady. She received a first love-letter, and thenceforth confined her walks to her own garden.

At first Diard had a run of luck at the Baths. He won three hundred thousand francs in two months; but it never occurred to him to send any money to his wife, he meant to keep as large a sum as possible by him, and to play for yet higher stakes. Towards the end of the last month a Marchese di Montefiore came to the Baths, preceded by a reputation for a fine figure, and great wealth, for the match that he had made with an English lady of family, and most of all for a passion for gaming. Diard waited for his old comrade in arms, to add the spoils to his winnings. A gambler with something like four hundred thousand francs at his back can command most things; Diard felt confident in his luck, and renewed his acquaintance with Montefiore. That gentleman received him coldly, but they played together, and Diard lost everything.

"Montefiore, my dear fellow," said the sometime quartermaster, after a turn round the room in which he had ruined himself, "I owe you a hundred thousand francs; but I have left my money at Bordeaux, where my wife is staying."

As a matter of fact, Diard had notes for the amount in his pockets at that moment, but, with the self-possession of a man accustomed to take in all the possibilities of a situation at a glance, he still hoped something from the incalculable chances of the gaming-table. Montefiore had expressed a desire to see something of Bordeaux; and if Diard were to settle at once with him, he would have nothing left, and could not

have his "revenge." A "revenge' will sometimes more than make good all previous losses. All these burning hopes depended on the answer that the Marquis might give.

"Let it stand, my dear fellow," said Montefiore; "we will go to Bordeaux together. I am rich enough now in all conscience; why should I take an old comrade's money?"

Three days later, Diard and the Italian were at Bordeaux. Montefiore offered the Provençal his revenge. In the course of an evening, which Diard began by paying down the hundred thousand francs, he lost two hundred thousand more upon parole. He was as light-hearted over his losses as if he could swim in gold. It was eleven o'clock, and a glorious night, surely Montefiore must wish to breathe the fresh air under the open sky, and to take a walk to cool down a little after the excitement of play; Diard suggested that the Italian should accompany him to his house and take a cup of tea there when the money was paid over.

"But Mme. Diard!" queried Montefiore.

"Pshaw!" answered the Provençal.

They went downstairs together; but before leaving the house, Diard went into the dining-room, asked for a glass of water, and walked about the room as he waited for it. In this way he managed to secrete a tiny steel knife with a handle of mother-of-pearl, such as is used at dessert for fruit; the thing had not yet been put away in its place.

"Where do you live?" asked Montefiore, as they crossed the court; "I must leave word, so as to have the carriage sent round for me."

Diard gave minute directions.

"Of course, I am perfectly safe as long as I am with you, you see," said Montefiore in a low voice, as he took Diard's arm; "but if I came back by myself, and some scamp were to follow me, I should be worth killing."

"Then have you money about you?"

"Oh! next to nothing," said the cautious Italian, "only my winnings. But they would make a pretty fortune for a penniless rascal; he might take brevet rank as an honest man afterwards for the rest of his life, that I know."

Diard took the Italian into a deserted street. He had noticed the gateway of a single house in it at the end of a sort of avenue of trees, and that there were high dark walls on either side. Just as they reached the end of this road he had the audacity to ask his friend, in soldierly fashion, to walk on. Montefiore understood Diard's meaning, and turned to go with him. Scarcely had they set foot in the shadow, when Diard sprang like a tiger upon the Marquis, tripped him up, boldly set his foot on his victim's throat, and plunged the knife again and again into his heart, till the blade snapped off short in his body. Then he searched Montefiore, took his money, his pocket-book, and everything that the Marquis had.

But though Diard had set about his work in a frenzy that left him perfectly clear-headed, and completed it with the deftness of a pickpocket; though he had taken his victim adroitly by surprise, Montefiore had had time to shriek "Murder!" once or twice, a shrill, far-reaching cry that must have set a thrill of horror through many sleepers, and his dying groans were fearful to hear.

Diard did not know that even as they turned into the avenue a crowd of people returning home from the theater had reached the upper end of the street. They had heard Montefiore's dying cries, though the Provençal had tried to stifle the sounds, never relaxing the pressure of his foot upon the murdered man's throat, until at last they ceased.

The high walls still echoed with dying groans which guided the crowd to the spot whence they came. The sound of many feet filled the avenue and rang through Diard's brain. The murderer did not lose his head; he came out from under the trees, and walked very quietly along the street, as if he had been drawn thither by curiosity, and saw that he had come too late to be of any use. He even turned to make sure of the distance that separated him from the new-comers, and saw them all rush into the avenue, save one man, who not unnaturally stood still to watch Diard's movements.

"There he lies! There he lies!" shouted voices from the avenue. They had caught sight of Montefiore's dead body in front of the great house. The gateway was shut fast, and after diligent search they could not find the murderer in the alley.

As soon as he heard the shout, Diard knew that he had got the start; he seemed to have the strength of a lion in him and the fleetness of a stag; he began to run, nay, he flew. He saw, or fancied that he saw, a second crowd at the other end of the road, and darted down a side street. But even as he fled windows were opened, and rows of heads were thrust out, lights and shouting issued from every door; to Diard, running for dear life, it seemed as if he were rushing through a tumult of cries and swaying lights. As he fled straight along the road before him, his legs stood him in such good stead that he left the crowd behind; but he could not keep out of sight of the windows, nor avoid the watchful eyes that traversed the length and breadth of a street faster than he could fly.

In the twinkling of an eye, soldiers, gendarmes, and householders were all astir. Some in their zeal had gone to wake up Commissaries of Police, others stood by the dead body. The alarm spread out into the suburbs in the direction of the fugitive (whom it followed like a conflagration from street to street) and into the heart of the town, where it reached the authorities. Diard heard as in a dream the hurrying feet, the yells of a whole horror-stricken city. But his ideas were still clear; he still preserved his presence of mind, and he rubbed his hands against the walls as he ran.

At last he reached the garden wall of his own house. He thought that he had thrown his pursuers off the scent. The place was perfectly silent save for the far-off murmur of the city, scarcely louder there than the sound of the sea. He dipped his hands into a runnel of clear water and drank. Then, looking about him, he saw a heap of loose stones by the roadside, and hastened to bury his spoils beneath it, acting on some dim notion such as crosses a criminal's mind when he has not yet found a consistent tale to account for his actions, and hopes to establish his innocence by lack of proofs against him. When this was accomplished, he tried to look

serene and calm, forced a smile, and knocked gently at his own door, hoping that no one had seen him. He looked up at the house front and saw a light in his wife's windows. And then in his agitation of spirit visions of Juana's peaceful life rose before him; he saw her sitting there in the candlelight with her children on either side of her, and the vision smote his brain like a blow from a hammer. The waiting-woman opened the door, Diard entered, and hastily shut it to again. He dared to breathe more freely, but he remembered that he was covered with perspiration, and sent the maid up to Juana, while he stayed below in the darkness. He wiped his face with a handkerchief and set his clothes in order, as a coxcomb smooths his coat before calling upon a pretty woman; then for a moment he stood in the moonlight examining his hands; he passed them over his face, and with unspeakable joy found that there was no trace of blood upon him; doubtless his victim's wounds had bled internally.

He went up to Juana's room, and his manner was as quiet and composed as if he had come home after the theater, to sleep. As he climbed the stairs, he could think over his position, and summed it up in a phrase—he must leave the house and reach the harbor. These ideas did not cross his brain in words; he saw them written in letters of fire upon the darkness. Once down at the harbor, he could lie in hiding during the day, and return at night for his treasure; then he would creep with it like a rat into the hold of some vessel, and leave the port, no one suspecting that he was on board. For all these things money was wanted in the first place. And he had nothing. The waiting-woman came with a light.

"Félicie," he said, "do you not hear that noise? people are shouting in the street. Go and find out what it is and let me know——"

His wife in her white dressing-gown was sitting at a table, reading Cervantes in Spanish with Francisco and Juan; the two children's eyes followed the text while their mother read aloud. All three of them stopped and looked up at Diard, who stood with his hands in his pockets, surprised perhaps by the surroundings, the peaceful scene, the fair faces of the woman and the children in the softly lit room. It was like a living picture of a Madonna with her son and the little Saint John on either side.

"Juana, I have something to say to you."

"What is it?" she asked. In her husband's wan and sallow face she read the news of this calamity that she had expected daily; it had come at last.

"Nothing, but I should like to speak to you—to you, quite alone," and he fixed his eyes on the two little boys.

"Go to your room, my darlings, and go to bed," said Juana. "Say your prayers without me."

The two boys went away in silence, with the uninquisitive obedience of children who have been well brought up.

"Dear Juana," Diard began in coaxing tones, "I left you very little money, and I am very sorry for it now. Listen, since I relieved you of the cares of your household by giving you an allowance, perhaps you may have saved a little money, as all women do?"

"No," answered Juana, "I have nothing. You did not allow anything for the expenses of the children's education. I am not reproaching you at all, dear; I only remind you that you forgot about it, to explain how it is that I have no money. All that you gave me I spent on lessons and masters——"

"That will do!" Diard broke in. "*Sacré tonnerre!* time is precious. Have you no jewels?"

"You know quite well that I never wear them."

"Then there is not a sou in the house!" cried Diard, like a man bereft of his senses.

"Why do you cry out?" she asked.

"Juana," he began, "I have just killed a man!"

Juana rushed to the children's room, and returned, shutting all the doors after her.

"Your sons must not hear a word of this," she said; "but whom can you have fought with?"

"Montefiore," he answered.

"Ah!" she said, and a sigh broke from her; "he is the one man whom you had a right to kill——"

"There were plenty of reasons why he should die by my hand. But let us lose no time. Money, I want money, in God's name! They may be on my track. We did not fight, Juana, I—I killed him."

"Killed him!" she cried. "But how——?"

"Why, how does one kill a man? He had robbed me of all I had at play; and I have taken it back again. Juana, since we have no money, you might go now, while everything is quiet, and look for my money under the heap of stones at the end of the road; you know the place."

"Then," said Juana, "you have robbed him."

"What business is it of yours? Fly I must, mustn't I? Have you any money? . . . They are after me!"

"Who?"

"The authorities."

Juana left the room, and came back suddenly.

"Here," she cried, holding out a trinket, but standing at a distance from him; "this is Doña Lagounia's cross. There are four rubies in it, and the stones are very valuable; so I have been told. Be quick, fly, fly—why don't you go?"

"Félicie has not come back," he said, in dull amazement. "Can they have arrested her?"

Juana dropped the cross on the edge of the table, and sprang towards the windows that looked out upon the street. Outside in the moonlight she saw a row of soldiers taking their places in absolute silence along the walls. She came back again; to all appearance she was perfectly calm.

"You have not a minute to lose," she said to her husband; "you must escape through the garden. Here is the key of the little door."

A last counsel of prudence led her, however, to give a glance over the garden. In the shadows under the trees she saw the silvery gleam of the metal rims of the gendarmes' caps. She even heard a vague murmur of a not far-distant crowd; sentinels were keeping back the people gathered together by curiosity at the further ends of the

streets by which the house was approached.

As a matter of fact, Diard had been seen from the windows of the houses; the maid-servant had been frightened, and afterwards arrested; and, acting on this information, the military and the crowd had soon blocked the ends of the streets that lay on two sides of the house. A dozen gendarmes, coming off duty at the theaters, were posted outside; others had climbed the wall, and were searching the garden, a proceeding authorized by the serious nature of the crime.

"Monsieur," said Juana, "it is too late. The whole town is aroused."

Diard rushed from window to window with the wild recklessness of a bird that dashes frantically against every pane. Juana stood absorbed in her thoughts.

"Where can I hide?" he asked.

He looked at the chimney, and Juana stared at the two empty chairs. To her it seemed only a moment since her children were sitting there. Just at that moment the gate opened, and the courtyard echoed with the sound of many footsteps.

"Juana, dear Juana, for pity's sake, tell me what to do."

"I will tell you," she said; "I will save you."

"Ah! you will be my good angel!"

Again Juana returned with one of Diard's pistols; she held it out to him, and turned her head away. Diard did not take it. Juana heard sounds from the courtyard; they had brought in the dead body of the Marquis to confront the murderer. She came away from the window and looked at Diard; he was white and haggard; his strength failed him; he made as if he would sink into a chair.

"For your children's sake," she said, thrusting the weapon into his hands.

"But, my dear Juana, my little Juana, do you really believe that . . .? Juana, is there such need of haste? . . . I would like to kiss you before . . ."

The gendarmes were on the stairs. Then Juana took up the pistol, held it at Diard's head; with a firm grasp on his throat she held him tightly in spite of his cries, fired, and let the weapon fall to the ground.

The door was suddenly flung open at that moment. The public prosecutor, followed by a magistrate and his clerk, a doctor, and the gendarmes, all the instruments of man's justice, appeared upon the scene.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Is that M. Diard?" answered the public prosecutor, pointing to the body lying bent double upon the floor.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Your dress is covered with blood, madame——"

"Do you not understand how it is?" asked Juana.

She went over to the little table and sat down there, and took up the volume of Cervantes; her face was colorless; she strove to control her inward nervous agitation.

"Leave the room," said the public prosecutor to the gendarmes. He made a sign to the magistrate and the doctor, and they remained.

"Madame, under the circumstances, we can only congratulate you on your husband's death. If he was carried away by passion, at any rate he has

died like a soldier, and it is vain for justice to pursue him now. Yet little as we may desire to intrude upon you at such a time, the law obliges us to inquire into a death by violence. Permit us to do our duty."

"May I change my dress?" she asked, laying down the volume.

"Yes, madame, but you must bring it here. The doctor will doubtless require it——"

"It would be too painful to Mme. Diard to be present while I go through my task," said the doctor, understanding the public prosecutor's suspicions. "Will you permit her, gentlemen, to remain in the adjoining room?"

The two functionaries approved the kindly doctor's suggestion, and Félicie went to her mistress. Then the magistrate and the public prosecutor spoke together for a while in a low voice. It is the unhappy lot of administrators of justice to be in duty bound to suspect everybody and everything. By dint of imagining evil motives, and every possible combination that they may bring about, so as to discover the truth that lurks beneath the most inconsistent actions, it is impossible but that their dreadful office should in course of time dry up the source of the generous impulses to which they may never yield. If the sensibilities of the surgeon who explores the mysteries of the body are blunted by degrees, what becomes of the inner sensibility of the judge who is compelled to probe the intricate recesses of the human conscience? Magistrates are the first victims of their profession; their progress is one perpetual mourning for their lost illusions, and the crimes that hang so heavily about the necks of criminals weigh no less upon their judges. An old man seated in the tribunal of justice is sublime; but do we not shudder to see a young face there? In this case the magistrate was a young man, and it was his duty to say to the public prosecutor, "Was the woman her husband's accomplice, do you think? Must we take proceedings? Ought she, in your opinion, to be examined?"

By way of reply, the public prosecutor shrugged his shoulders; apparently it was a matter of indifference.

"Montefiore and Diard," he remarked, "were a pair of notorious scamps. The servant girl knew nothing about the crime. We need not go any further."

The doctor was making his examination of Diard's body, and dictating his report to the clerk. Suddenly he rushed into Juana's room.

"Madame——"

Juana, who had changed her blood-stained dress, confronted the doctor.

"You shot your husband, did you not?" he asked, bending to say the words in her ear.

"Yes, monsieur," the Spaniard answered.

"And from circumstantial evidence" (the doctor went on dictating) *"we conclude that the said Diard has taken his life by his own act.*—Have you finished?" he asked the clerk after a pause.

"Yes," answered the scribe.

The doctor put his signature to the document. Juana glanced at him, and could scarcely keep back the tears that, for a moment, filled her eyes.

"Gentlemen," she said, and she turned to the public prosecutor, "I am a stranger, a Spaniard. I do not know

the law. I know no one in Bordeaux. I entreat you to do me this kindness, will you procure me a passport for Spain?"

"One mment!" exclaimed the magistrate. "Madame, what has become of the sum of money that was stolen from the Marquis di Montefiore?"

"M. Diard said something about a heap of stones beneath which he had hidden it," she answered.

"Where?"

"In the street."

The two functionaries exchange glances. Juana's involuntary start was sublime. She appealed to the doctor.

"Can they suspect me?" she said in his ear; "suspect *me* of some villainy? The heap of stones is sure to be somewhere at the end of the garden. Go yourself, I beg of you, and look for it and find the money."

The doctor went, accompanied by the magistrate, and found Montefiore's pocket-book.

Two days later Juana sold her golden cross to meet the expenses of the journey. As she went with her two children to the diligence in which they were about to travel to the Spanish fontier, someone called her name in the street. It was her dying mother, who was being taken to the hospital; she had caught a glimpse of her daughter through a slit in the curtains of the stretcher on which she lay. Juana bade them carry the stretcher into a gateway, and there for the last time the mother and daughter met. Low as their voices were while they spoke together, Juan overheard these words of farewell—

"Mother, die in peace; I have suffered for you all."

Maitre Cornelius

To M. le Comte George Mniszech

Some envious beings may imagine on seeing this page adorned by one of the most illustrious of Samartian names that I am trying, as the goldsmiths do, to enhance a modern work with an ancient jewel—one of the fashions of the day. But you, my dear Count, and a few others, will know that I am only aiming at paying the debt I owe to Talent, Memory, and Friendship.

In 1479, on All-Saints' Day, the time at which this history commences, vespers were just ending in the cathedral of Tours. The Archbishop Hélie de Bourdeilles arose from his throne to himself give the benediction to the faithful. The sermon had been long, and darkness had fallen before its conclusion; and in some portions of the great church, the towers of which were not finished at that time, the densest obscurity prevailed.

However, a goodly number of tapers were burning in honor of the saints, on the triangular frames destined to receive these so pious offerings, the merit and significance of which have never been

properly explained. The lights on each altar and the candles of the candelabra in the chancel were all flaming. Most irregularly shed among the forest of columns and arches which support the roof of the main aisles of the cathedral, the gleam of those masses of candles scarcely illumined the vast building; for, by the strong shadows cast by the pillars and projected upward among the galleries, they caused a myriad fantastic effects and increased the gloom that enveloped the arches, the vaulted veilings, and the lateral chapels—which, even at mid-day, were always gloomy.

The immense congregation presented no less picturesque effects. Some figures were so vaguely seen in the uncertain light that they seemed like phantoms; while others, lit up by some chance sidelight, drew the attention like the principal heads in a picture. Some statues were animate, some of the men were stone. Here and there eyes might be seen sparkling among the columns; the marble saw, the stone spake, the vaulted groins re-echoed sighs, the whole edifice was instinct with life.

The existence of nations can present no more solemn scenes, no moment more majestic. Mankind in the mass needs motion to make it poetical; but in these resorts of religious thought, when mundane wealth unites itself with celestial splendor, an incredible sublimity is experienced in the silence; there is awe in the bent knees, hope in the upraised hands. The concert of feeling which is ascending heavenward from each soul produces an inexplicable phenomenon of spiritual effect.

The mystical exaltation of the true worshipers reacts upon each individual; the feebler are doubtless upborne upon this flood-tide of faith and love. Prayer, an electric force, draws our nature higher than itself. This involuntary unison of all wills, each equally humbled to earth, equally risen to heaven, contains, doubtless, the secret of the magic influence wielded by the intonations of the priests, the music of the organs, the perfumes and pomps of the altar, the voices of the crowd, its silent meditations.

Therefore we need not be astonished to see in the Middle Ages that so many affairs of the heart began in churches after long ecstatic hours—passions not always ending in sanctity, and for which, as is usually the case, woman did the penance.

In those days religious sentiment certainly was in close affinity to love; either it was the motive or the end of it. Love was but a second religion; it had its fine frenzies, its innocent superstitions, its sublime emotions, all in sympathy with Christianity.

The manners of that period will also serve to explain the alliance existing between religion and love. First, then, social life had no place of meeting but before the altar. Lords, vassals, men, women were never equals elsewhere. In the church alone could lovers meet and exchange their vows. The festivals of the Church formed our predecessors' theaters; woman's soul was more deeply stirred than to-day it is at an opera or a ball; and does not every strong emotion invariably bring woman around to love?

So, by dint of mingling with life and seizing it in all its acts and interests, religion had become the sharer of every virtue, the accomplice of every vice. Re-

ligion had become a science; it was mixed up with politics, eloquence, crime; it entered the skin of the sick man and the poor; it sat on thrones—it was all-pervading. These semi-learned observations may, perhaps, serve to vindicate the veracity of this Study, though certain details may scandalize the more perfect morals of our age, which are, as is known of all, a trifle too strait-laced.

At that moment when the priests stopped their chanting, and the notes of the organ mingled with the vibrant voices of the loud "Amen" as it issued from the deep chests of the choir-men, and sent a murmuring echo through the farther arches, the while the devout assembly awaited the archbishop's benediction, a burgher, impatient to get home or trembling for the safety of his purse in the crowd when the congregation should disperse, quietly slipped out, taking the risk of being called a bad Catholic. On this, a gentleman, who was leaning on one of the enormous columns that surround the choir, where he was enshrouded in the shadows, hastened to take the place so recently vacated by the worthy Tourangeau. Which done, he quickly hid his face behind the tall plumes of his tall, gray cap, and knelt down before his chair with so deep an air of contrition that it might even have deceived an inquisitor.

His immediate neighbors, after observing him closely, seemed to recognize him; after which, as with one accord, they returned to their devotions with a significant shrug expressive of all their thoughts—a caustic, jeering, mocking scandal. Two old women nodded their heads expressively, exchanging glances which seemed to penetrate the future.

The chair into which this young man had glided was near by a chapel built in between two columns, inclosed by an iron railing. It was a custom for the dean and chapter of the cathedral to rent at a high figure to seignorial families, and even to rich burgesses, the right to be present at the services, themselves and their household exclusively, in the various lateral chapels situated along the side-aisles of the cathedral. This simony is practiced even now. Then a woman had her chapel as she now has her box at the opera. The tenants of these privileged places were expected to decorate and keep up the altars therein; and each made it a pride to adorn theirs most sumptuously—a vanity which, needless to say, was not rebuked by the Church.

In this particular chapel a lady was kneeling close to the railing on a handsome rug of red velvet trimmed with gold tassels, and close to the spot but now vacated by the worthy citizen. A silver-gilt lamp hung from the vaulted ceiling of the chapel before the magnificently decorated altar and cast its mild light on the Book of Hours[1] held by the lady. The book trembled violently in her hand as the young man approached her.

"Amen!"

To that response, chanted with a low, sweet, agitated voice, happily submerged in the now general clamor, she rapidly added in a whisper:

"You will ruin me!"

The words were spoken with an innocence to which any man of delicacy would at once have submitted; they reached and pierced the heart. But the

[1] Prayer-book.

stranger, carried away perhaps by one of those paroxysms of passion which stifle conscience, remained in his chair, and slightly raised his head that he might peer into the chapel.

"He sleeps!" he replied in a voice so low that the words could only be heard by the young woman as sound is heard in its own echo.

The lady turned pale; her furtive glance left for an instant the vellum page of the missal and turned on the old man whom the youthful one had designated. What terrible complicity was in that look? When the young woman had cautiously examined the old man, she drew a deep breath and raised her brow, adorned with a precious jewel, to a picture of the Virgin; this simple movement, her attitude, the glistening eye, disclosed her life with ingenuous candor; had she been wicked she would have exercised more dissimulation.

The person who thus inspired these two with terror was a little old hunchback, nearly bald, with a savage expression, and who wore a long, dingy-colored gray beard cut into the shape of a broad fan. On his breast glittered the cross of Saint Michael. His coarse, thick hands were covered with rough gray hairs and had been clasped together, but they had now dropped slightly asunder in the slumber to which he had so imprudently yielded himself. The right hand seemed ready to grasp the dagger, the handle guard of which was of iron in shape like a shell. In the manner in which he had disposed this weapon the hilt was immediately under his hand; if by ill-luck he should touch it he would, beyond doubt, awaken instantly and look at his wife.

His sardonic mouth, the peaked chin aggressively pushed forward, showed all the characteristics of malignancy, of a coldly cruel sagacity, which would surely enable him to divine all because he suspected all. His yellow forehead was puckered like to those of men who believe nothing, weigh everything, who test the exact meaning of every human act and the meaning thereof. His bodily frame, though deformed, was bony and sinewy; it looked to be both vigorous and irritable; he was, in short, an ogre who had been spoiled in the making.

When this terrible being should awake the young lady was evidently in much danger. That jealous husband would certainly not fail to at once detect the difference between the worthy old burgher, who gave him no umbrage, and the newcomer, a young courtier, slender and elegant.

"*Libera nos a malo*" [deliver us from evil], said she, trying to impart her fears to the young cavalier.

The latter raised his eyes and looked at her. Tears were in his eyes; the tears of love and despair. When the young lady saw them she trembled and thus betrayed herself. Perhaps both had long resisted and were no longer able to further hold out against a love which increased with each recurring day through invincible obstacles, brooded over by fear, strengthened by youth.

The lady was fairly handsome; but her pallor told of sufferings endured in secret, which made her interesting. Moreover, she had an elegant figure and her hair was the most lovely in the world. Watched over by a tiger, her life was the forfeit if discovered whispering

a word, accepting a glance, or in permitting a mere pressure of the hand.

It is possible that love may have been more deeply felt than by those hearts, if never more rapturously confessed, never more enjoyed, but certes it is that never was passion so perilously circumstanced. It is easy to understand that to these two beings the air, the sounds about them, the foot-falls and so forth, things of utter indifference to other people, presented hidden qualities, perceptible peculiarities which only they could distinguish. It may be that their love caused them to become faithful interpreters of the touch of the icy hands of the old priest to whom they made their auricular confessions of their sins, and from whose hands they received the Host as they knelt at the holy altar of God. It was a deep love, love gashed into the soul like as a scar is hewn upon the body and which remains during the whole of our life! As these two young people regarded each other, the woman seemed to say to her lover: "Let us perish, but as one." And the young knight made answer: "We are one, but we will not die!"

For her response she made him a sign, indicating the presence of her elderly duenna and two pages.

The duenna slept; the pages were but youthful ones and seemingly careless of what might happen, of good or evil, to their master.

"Do not be alarmed as you leave the church; go and be managed as you may be led."

The young noble had but murmured these words, when the hand of the old seigneur slipped down upon the handle of his dagger. Feeling the cold touch of the iron he instantly awoke, and his tawny eyes at once fixed themselves upon his wife. By a peculiarity, seldom granted even to men of genius, he awoke with an alert brain and as vivid ideas as though he had never slept.

He was jealous.

The lover, one eye on his mistress, the other on her husband, whom he closely watched, now rose and vanished behind a column at the first movement he had detected in the old man's hands; then he effaced himself swiftly as a bird. The lady's eyes were engaged on her book and she appeared to be quite calm. But try how she might, she could not prevent the flushing of her face nor the unwonted violence of the beating of her heart. The old lord saw the unusual crimson of her cheeks, forehead, and even of her eyelids. He could also hear the vehement throbs of her heart, which were distinctly audible in the chapel. He looked inquisitively around, but not seeing anyone whom he could distrust, said to his wife:

"What troubles you, my dear?"

"The scent of the incense sickens me," she replied.

"Is it particularly unpleasant to-day?" he asked.

Despite this sarcastic query, the wily old man pretended to accept this excuse; but still he suspected some treachery and resolved to watch his treasure more carefully even than he had hitherto done.

The benediction was pronounced. Without waiting for the *Sæcula sæculorum,* the crowd rushed like a heaving torrent to the doors of the church. Following his usual custom, the old lord waited until the general hurry was over;

then issued forth, the duenna in front with the youngest page, who carried a lantern on a pole; himself, his wife on arm, being followed by the other page.

As he made his way to the side-door opening on the west nave of the cloister, by which he generally went out, a stream of people detached itself from the flood which obstructed the great portals and surged through the aisle around the old noble and his people. The mass was impacted too solidly to allow of his retracing his steps; and the gentleman and his wife were therefore pushed onward to the door by the tremendous pressure of the crowd behind them.

The husband tried to pass out first, dragging the lady by her arm, but just then he was jerked vigorously into the street and his wife snatched from him by a stranger. The sinister hunchback at once saw that he had fallen into a trap, and one that had been cleverly arranged.

It was now he repented himself that he had slept; but he collected his whole strength, seized his wife once more by the sleeve of her gown and with his other tried to cling fast to the door-post of the church; but love's ardor carried the day against jealous rage. The young man clasped his mistress round the waist and tore her away with the strength of despair; so violent was the disruption that the stuff of silk and gold was rent noisily apart, the brocade and whalebone gave way, and the old man remained standing with naught save the sleeve in his clutch.

A roar like that of a lion rose above the tumult of the multitude, and a terrible voice was heard bawling out the words:

"To me, Poitiers! Help; here to the door! The Comte de Saint-Vallier's retainers, here, help!"

And the Comte Aymar de Poitiers, Sire de Saint-Vallier, attempted to draw his sword and clear a space around him. But he found himself pressed upon and surrounded by forty or fifty gentlemen whom it were most dangerous to wound. Several of these, especially of the highest rank, replied gibingly to him as they dragged him along the cloisters.

With a lightning-like celerity the abductor carried the countess to an open chapel, seating her on a wooden bench behind a confessional box. By the light of the candles burning before the saint to whom the chapel was dedicated they gazed upon each other for a silent moment, clasped hands, and amazed at their audacity. The Countess could not summon the cruel courage to blame the young man for the boldness to which they owed this first and only instant of happiness.

"Will you fly with me into the adjacent States?" asked the young man eagerly. "Two English horses are awaiting us near-by which are able to do thirty leagues at a stretch."

"Ah!" she cried softly, "in what corner of the world could you find a hiding-place for a daughter of King Louis XI.?"

"True," answered the young man, silenced by a difficulty he had not anticipated.

"Why, then, did you tear me from my husband?" she asked in a voice of terror.

"Alas!" replied the young lover, "I did not guess at the agitation I should experience in finding myself by your side, in hearing your voice as you spoke

to me. I had arranged plans, two or three schemes, and now that I see you, I feel as if all were accomplished."

"But I am lost!" said the Countess.

"We are saved!" the young man cried in the blind enthusiasm of love. "Listen carefully to me."

"This will cost me my life!" said she, letting the tears that filled her eyes go rolling down her cheeks. "The Count will kill me—perhaps this very night! But go you to the King; tell him all the tortures his daughter has endured these five years. He loved me well when I was a child; he used to laugh and call me 'Marie-full-of-grace,' because I was so ugly. Ah! could he only know to what a man he gave me, his anger would be terrible. I have never dared complain out of a sense of pity for the Count. Beside, how could my plaint reach the ears of the King? Even my confessor is but a spy of Saint-Vallier. That is why I consented to this criminal meeting, hoping to find a champion—someone who will declare the truth to the King. But—may I dare trust? Oh!" she cried, turning pale and interrupting herself, "here comes the page."

The distraught Countess put her hands before her face and tried to veil it.

"Fear nothing," said the young lord, "he is ours! You may safely trust him; he belongs to me. When the count contrives to return to you, he will give us timely warning. In the confessional," he added in a muttered tone, "is a priest, a friend of mine; he will say that he rescued you from the turmoil, and drew you here for safety out of the crowd, and gave you his protection in this chapel. Thus all is arranged to deceive him."

At these words the Countess dried her tears, but a saddened expression clouded her face.

"He cannot be deceived," said she. "To-night he will know all. Beware his revenge. Save me from his blows. At once to Le Plessis, see the King, tell him——;" here she hesitated; but some dreadful memory gave her courage to disclose some secrets of her married life, so she continued:

"Yes, tell him that to obtain the mastery over me the Count has me bled in both arms—to exhaust me. Tell him that my husband drags me around by my hair; tell him that I am a prisoner; say that——"

Her heart was bursting, sobs choked her throat, tears rained from her eyes. In her agitation she allowed the young man to kiss her hand, the while he muttered broken, inconsecutive words.

"Poor love! No one may speak to the King. Although my uncle is chief master of his bowmen, I cannot obtain admission to Le Plessis. My darling lady! my most beautiful queen! Oh! but what has she not suffered? Marie, at least let me say two words to you, or we are assuredly lost."

"What will become of us," she murmured. Then, discerning on the dark wall a picture of the Virgin on which the light fell from the lamp, she cried out:

"Holy Mother of God, give us counsel!"

"To-night," said the young man, "I shall be in your room with you."

"How?" was her naïve question.

"This evening I go to propose myself as an apprentice to Maître Cornélius,

the King's silversmith. To him I bear a letter of introduction which will compel him to receive me. His house is next to yours. Once under the roof of that old scoundrel I can, by the aid of a silken ladder, soon find my way to your suite of rooms."

"Oh!" said she, petrified with horror, "if you love me, do not go to Maître Cornélius."

"Ah!" cried he, pressing her to his heart with all the energy of youth, "then, indeed, you do love me!"

"Yes," said she. "Are you not my sole hope? Beside," she added, regarding him with dignity, "you are a gentleman, I confide myself to your honor. So unhappy am I that you will never betray my trust. But to what end is all this? Go, the rather let me die than that you should abide in the house of Maître Cornélius. Do you not know that all his apprentices——"

"Have been hanged?" said the young noble, laughing.

"But do not go; you will become the victim of some sorcery."

"I cannot pay a too high price for the great honor of serving you," said he, with a look of such ardor that her eyes drooped under it.

"And my husband?" said she.

"Here is that will cause him to sleep," answered the young man, drawing a small phial from his belt.

"Not forever?" queried the Countess, tremblingly.

For all reply the young seigneur made a gesture of horror.

"I would long ago have defied him to mortal combat if it were not for his great age," said he. "But God preserve me from ridding his life by a philter."

"Forgive me," said the Countess, blushing. "My sins have cruelly punished me. In a moment of despair I have thought of killing the Count—I feared you might have the same desire. So great has my sorrow been that as yet I have never been able to confess the so wicked thought; I believed it would be repeated to him, and then he would be avenged on me. I have shamed you," she went on, distressed by his silence. "Well, I deserve your blame!"

She flung the phial with great violence to the ground and it was broken.

"Do not come," said she, "it is that my husband sleeps lightly; my duty demands that I await the help of Heaven —that will I do."

She arose to leave the chapel. "Ah!" cried the young man, "but bid me kill him and I will do it. You will see me this evening, madame."

"I showed wisdom in destroying that drug," she murmured in a voice husky with joy at finding herself so ardently loved. "The dread of arousing my husband will save us from ourselves."

"I pledge you my life," said the young man, pressing her hand.

"Should the King be willing, the pope can annul my marriage; then we may be united," she cried, giving him a look full of delicious hopes.

"Monseigneur comes!" exclaimed the page, bustling in.

Instantly the young noble, surprised at the short time he had gained with his mistress and greatly wondering at the Count's celerity, snatched a kiss which the Countess could not refuse.

"To-night," said he, as he hastily slipped out of the chapel.

Thanks to the darkness, the lover

made his way to the great portal in safety, gliding from pillar to pillar in the long shadows which they cast across the nave. An old canon suddenly issued from the confessional, came to the side of the Countess and gently closed the railing, while the page gravely marched up and down with the manner of a sentry.

A blaze of light heralded the coming of the Count. He was accompanied by a number of his friends and by servants bearing torches; himself advanced, drawn sword in hand. His gloomy gaze seemed to pierce the dense cathedral shadows and to rake the remotest depths.

"Monseigneur, madame is there," said the page to him.

The Count de Saint-Vallier found his wife kneeling on the steps before the altar, the canon standing alongside reading his breviary. At the sight the Count violently shook the railing, as if to give vent to his fury.

"What want you here in church, with a drawn sword?" asked the old priest.

"Father, this is my husband," said the Countess.

The priest took a key out of his sleeve and unlocked the railed gate of the chapel. The Count, almost against his will, cast an eye into the confessional, then entered the chapel, and seemed to be listening to the silence of the place.

"Monsieur," said his wife, "you owe your thanks to this venerable canon for giving me a refuge here."

The Comte de Saint-Vallier turned pale with anger; he dared not look at his friends, who had come less with the intention of assisting than of laughing at him. Then he curtly answered:

"Thank the Lord, my father, for I will surely find some way to repay you."

He took his wife by the arm, and, without giving her an opportunity to finish the courtesy she was making to the canon, he signed to his retainers and left the church without uttering a word to those who had accompanied him. His silence was ominous.

Impatient to reach his castle and occupied as he was in an effort to get at the truth, he made his way through the tortuous street which at that time separated the cathedral from the chancellerie, a fine building but recently erected by the Chancellor Juvénal des Ursins, on the site of an old fortress given by Charles VII. to that faithful servant as a guerdon for his splendid services. This street, the Rue de la Scellerie, so named in honor of the office of the Great Seal which long stood there, connected old Tours with Châteauneuf, where was the noted abbey of Saint-Martin, of which many kings had been glad to be elected canons. After long discussions this borough had been incorporated with the city; this had been so now for nearly a hundred years.

At last the Count reached the Rue du Mûrier, in which his dwelling, the Hôtel de Poitiers, was situated. When the escort had passed the gates into the courtyard, and they had been closed after them, a profound silence pervaded the narrow street where a few high seigneurs at that time had residences; for this new suburb of the town was near to Le Plessis, the King's usual place of abode, and where the courtiers when summoned could instantly go. The last house in the street was also the last in the town. It belonged to Maître

Cornélius Hoogworst, an old merchant of Brabant, to whom Louis XI. gave his closest confidences in the various financial dealings which his cunning policy required done outside his own kingdom. For the favorable opportunity it gave to his tyranny over his wife, the Comte de Saint-Vallier had taken the mansion next to the house of Maître Cornélius.

An explanation of the houses will show the advantages offered the jealous husband. It was easy to be seen that the same architect had built both of them, and that they were destined as the abodes of tyrants. The Count's house had been built near the old boundary of the city, and was inclosed in a garden. On the side next the embankment, lately constructed by Louis XI. between Tours and Le Plessis, dogs defended the entrance to the premises; while on the east they were divided from the nearest houses by a large courtyard; on the west backed up the house occupied by Maître Cornélius.

Each was of sinister aspect and resembled a small fort, which could be well defended against a turbulent populace. The riots and civil wars of this period amply justified these precautions. The windows looking on the street were strongly barred with iron, and shutters of the same material. A stone block used for mounting horseback stood close to the porch.

As six o'clock was striking from the great tower of the Abbey Saint-Martin, the lover of the hapless countess walked past the de Poitiers Hôtel and paused there for a moment to listen for any sound made by the servants in the lower hall, who were taking their suppers. Casting a glance at the window of the room he supposed to be his mistress's, he went on his way to the next house. Everywhere on his way the young man had heard the roistering of the jolly holiday-makers, in honor of the day. The badly joined blinds let out beams of light, the chimneys smoked, the pleasant savor of roasting meats pervaded the town. Religious services being over, the inhabitants were regaling themselves with confused mutterings of satisfaction, more readily imagined than described. But here deep silence reigned, for in those two dwellings lived two passions which can never rejoice.

Beyond them stretched the silent country, while these two dwellings standing beneath the towers of Saint-Martin, standing apart from the others in the street, at the crooked end of it, seemed afflicted with leprosy. The opposite building was the property of some State criminal and was under the ban of the law. No young man but would have been struck by the great contrast. About, as he was, to fling himself into a horribly hazardous enterprise, it is not to be wondered at that the daring young noble stopped short before the door of the silversmith-treasurer, and called to mind the many uncanny tales he had heard of the life of Maître Cornélius—tales which had caused such untoward terror to the Countess.

In this time a man of war, a lover even, every man trembled at the word "magic." Few indeed were the minds whose imaginations were incredulous of occult forces and tales of the marvelous. This lover of the Comtesse de Saint-Vallier, one of the daughters of Louis XI. by Mme. de Sassenage, and born in Dauphiné, courageous as he was in other

respects, was apt to think twice before entering the house of a sorcerer.

The history of Maître Cornélius Hoogworst will fully explain the confidence he had inspired in the Count, the terrible fear of the Countess, and the hesitation to which the lover now made pause. To enable the nineteenth-century reader to clearly understand how such seeming commonplace events could be turned into something supernatural, and to cause them to share the dread of that olden time, it is necessary to interrupt the course of the narrative and cast a glance at the preceding life and career of Maître Cornélius.

Cornélius Hoogworst, one of the richest merchants of Ghent, having drawn upon himself the resentment of Charles, Duke of Burgundy, had found a refuge and protection at the Court of Louis XI. The King was well aware of the advantages he could gain from a man connected with all the principal houses of commerce of Flanders, Venice, and the East; he naturalized and ennobled—by royal letters—and, more, flattered Maître Cornélius; a most rare thing with that monarch. Louis XI. pleased the Fleming as much as the Fleming pleased the King. Wily, suspicious, avaricious; equally politic, equally well informed; both superior to their time; each understanding the other marvelously; they discarded and resumed with equal facility, the one his conscience, the other his religion; they worshiped the same Virgin—one from conviction, the other from policy; in short, if we may trust the jealous statements of Olivier le Diam and Tristan, the King resorted to the Fleming's house for those diversions with which King Louis XI. amused himself. History has been at the pains to preserve to the knowledge of posterity the licentious tastes of this monarch who was certainly not averse to debauchery. No doubt the Fleming derived both pleasure and profit in lending himself to the caprices and indulgences of his royal client.

Cornélius at this time had lived for nine years in the city of Tours. During these nine years extraordinary events had occurred in his house, which had made him the object of universal execration. On his arrival he had spent immense sums in order to safely guard his treasures. The curious inventions secretly made for him by the locksmiths of the town, the singular precautions he took to bring them to his house in a way to compel their silence, were for a long time the subject of countless tales, which furnished the evening gossip of the Tourangeaux. These peculiar devices on the part of the old man caused everyone to believe him the possessor of Oriental wealth. Consequently the story-tellers of that district—the birthplace of French romance—built rooms full of gold and precious stones in the Fleming's house, not omitting to ascribe this fabulous wealth to compacts with unholy genii.

Maître Cornélius had brought with him from Ghent two Flemish servants, an old woman and a young apprentice; the latter, youthful, with a gentle, attractive appearance, served as his secretary, cashier, factotum, and messenger. During the first year of his settlement in Tours a considerable robbery was effected on his premises; judicial inquiry showed that the crime must have

been committed by one of its inmates. The old man had his two men-servants and apprentice put in prison. The young lad was weakly and he died under the sufferings of the "question,"[1] still protesting his innocence. The two men confessed the crime to escape torture; but when asked by the judge where the stolen property could be found, they kept silence; so, after renewed tortures, they were tried, condemned, and hung. On their way to the gallows they declared themselves innocent, as is the custom of all men when about to be executed.

For many a day the town of Tours talked over this singular business; but the criminals were Flemish, and the interest in their unhappy fate, and that of the young clerk, soon evaporated. In those days, wars and seditions supplied continual excitement, and each day's new drama eclipsed that of the preceding night.

More affected by the loss of his pelf than by the death of his three servants, Maître Cornélius lived alone in the house with the old Flemish woman, his sister. From the King he obtained the privilege to use the royal couriers for his private affairs; sold his mules to a muleteer in the neighborhood, and lived thenceforward in the deepest solitude, seeing no one but the King, and transacting his business through the medium of Jews, who, shrewd arithmeticians, served him faithfully and well for the sake of his so-powerful interest.

Some time after this affair, the King himself placed with his old *torçonnoir* a young orphan in whom he took much interest. Louis XI. called Maître Cornélius by that obsolete term, familiarly, which under the reign of Saint-Louis meant a usurer, a collector of taxes, a man who squeezed money out of folk by extortion. The term *tortionnaire,* which is a legal term still extant, explains the old French word *torçonnier,* and which is often spelled *tortionneur.*

The poor young boy devoted himself to the interest of his master, the old Fleming, and succeeded in winning his encomiums and getting into his good graces. One winter's night the diamonds placed in Cornélius's keeping by the King of England as security for a hundred thousand crowns were stolen; suspicion naturally fell on the poor orphan. Louis XI. was the more severe with him because he had vouched for the boy's fidelity. So, after a very brief examination by the grand provost, the unfortunate youth was taken out and hanged. After that it was a long time before anyone dared to go to learn the art of banking and exchange from Maître Cornélius.

In the course of time, however, it came that two young men of the town, Tourangeaux, men of honor, eager to make their fortunes, took service with the silversmith. Large robberies coincided with the admission of the two youths into the house. The circumstances of these crimes, the manner of the perpetration, plainly enough showed some collusion between the thieves and the inmates of the house; how was it possible that the newcomers should escape accusation? Become by this time more than ever suspicious and vindictive, the old Fleming laid the matter before the King, who placed the case in the hands of his grand provost. A trial

[1] Torture to induce confession.

was promptly had, and more quickly finished. Each was more promptly executed.

But the inhabitants of Tours, in their patriotism, secretly blamed Tristan l'Hermite for unseemly haste. Guilty or not guilty, the young fellow-townsmen were looked upon as victims, and Cornélius as an executioner. The two families thus thrown into mourning were of much esteem; their complaints secured much sympathy, and, little by little, they succeeded in making it come to be common belief that all the victims sent to the scaffold by the King's silversmith were innocent. Some went so far as to say that the cruel miser imitated the King and sought to put terror and the gibbet between himself and the world of men; others there were who declared he had never been robbed at all—that these terrible executions were brought about as the result of cold calculation; that all he cared about was to be relieved of all care for his treasure.

The first effect of these rumors was to effectually isolate Maître Cornélius. The good people of Tours treated him as they would have done a leper; called him the *tortionnaire,* and named his house Malemaison — House of Evil. Even if the Fleming could have found strangers to the town bold enough to enter his service, the inhabitants of the town would have prevented by their warnings. The most favorable impression had of Maître Cornélius was that of those who considered him as being merely baneful and sinister. Some he inspired with instinctive dread; others were impressed with the power that is always paid to great wealth and influence; to some he had the fascination of mystery. His mode of life, his countenance, and the favor of the King seemed to justify all the rumors of which he was the subject.

After the death of his persecutor, the Duke of Burgundy, Cornélius traveled much in foreign lands; during his absence the King caused his house to be patrolled by a company of his Scottish Guard. This royal solicitude it was that made the courtiers believe that Maître Cornélius had bequeathed his property to Louis XI. When he was home it was but rarely that he left his premises; the gentlemen of the Court frequently visited him, and he loaned them money rather liberally, though he was very capricious about so doing. On certain days he refused them a sou; the next day he would offer large sums—always, though, at high interest and on undoubtedly good security. He was a good Catholic, went regularly to the services, and always attended the earliest Mass at Saint-Martin's; and as he had purchased there a chapel in perpetuity, as elsewhere, he was separated even in church from other Christians. A popular proverb that day, and one long remembered, was the saying: "You passed in front of the usurer; evil will befall you." To pass in front of the Fleming explained every misfortune; it explained all sudden pains and evil, involuntary depression, bad turns of fortune among the people of Tours. Even at Court the people more often than not attributed to Cornélius that fatal influence which Italian, Spanish, and Asiatic superstition has termed the "Evil Eye."

Only for the terrible power of Louis XI., which overspread his house like a mantle, the populace on the least pretext

would have utterly demolished La Malemaison—that "evil house" in the Rue du Mêrier. And yet it was Cornélius that was the first to plant mulberry trees in Tours, and at that time the Tourangeaux looked upon him as their good genie. Who may depend on popular favor?

A few seigneurs having met Maître Cornélius on his journeys out of France, had been astonished at his friendliness and good-humor. At Tours he was always gloomy and absent-minded, but yet he returned there. Some inexplicable attraction brought him back to his dismal house in the Rue du Mûrier. Like a snail, whose life is so strongly a part of its shell, he admitted to the King that he was not at his ease elsewhere; he only found it under the bolts and time-worn stone of his little bastille; and yet he was well aware that should the King die it would be the most dangerous spot on earth for him.

"The Devil is amusing himself at the expense of our crony the *torçonnier*," said Louis XI. to his barber, a few days before the Festival of All-Saints. "He says he has been robbed again, but he can't hang anybody this time, unless he hangs himself. The old vagabond came and asked me if I had not chanced to carry off a string of rubies that he had intended selling to me. *'Pasques-Dieu!* I don't steal what I have only to take.' said I."

"And was he afraid?" asked the barber.

"Misers are only afraid of one thing," responded the King. "My chum the *torçonnier* knows very well that I shall not plunder him for nothing; otherwise I were unjust, and I have never yet done anything but what is just and necessary."

"And yet that old bandit overcharges you," replied the barber.

"You only wish he did, don't you?" answered the King, with a sinister look at the barber.

"By Mahomet's belly, Sire, the inheritance would be a noble one, between you, me, and the Devil."

"There, there!" said the King. "Don't put bad ideas into my head. My crony is a more faithful man than many whose fortunes I have made—it may be it is because he owes me nothing."

For the two last years, Maître Cornélius had lived entirely alone with his old sister, who was believed to be a witch. A tailor who lived hard by declared that he had frequently seen her at night, on the roof of the house, looking out for the witches' Sabbath. This seemed the more extraordinary, as it was known to be the miser's custom to lock up his sister in her bedroom when night came, the windows of which were barred with iron.

As he grew older, Cornélius, always afraid of being robbed or duped by men, came to hate everybody but the King, whom he highly esteemed. He had sunk into a state of abject misanthropy; but, like most misers, his passion for gold, the assimilation, as it were, of that metal with his very substance, became more and more complete, while age but intensified it. He was even suspicious of his sister, though she was a shade the more miserly and rapacious than her brother, and really surpassed him in penurious inventiveness. Their way of life was a mysterious enigma. The old woman rarely took bread of the baker; so seldom she appeared in the market, that the least credulous of the townsfoll

at last attributed to her some diabolical knowledge of a secret for maintaining life. Others there were who dabbled in alchemy that declared that Maître Cornélius possessed the power of making gold. Men of science stated that he had discovered the Universal Panacea. According to most of the country people, when they spoke of him, Cornélius was a chimerical being, and a number came to view his house out of mere curiosity.

The young seigneur, whom we left in front of that house, looked about him, first at the Hôtel de Poitiers, the home of his mistress, and then at the Malemaison. The moonbeams shed their light on the prominent parts, giving a tint of light and shadow in the carvings and reliefs. The caprices of this white light gave a sinister expression to both edifices; it seemed as if nature had tried to encourage the superstitious dread that hung around the place.

The young man called to mind the many traditions which made Cornélius such a strange and formidable person. Though the violence of his passion still held him to the decision of entering that house, and to stay there long enough to accomplish his purpose, he yet hesitated at taking the final step, all the time aware that he would at last do this. But what man is there who, in a crisis of his life, does not willingly pay heed to presentiments, and gyrate, as it were, over the precipice of uncertainty? A lover worthy of his love, the young man feared he might perish before the love of the Countess should crown his life.

His mental deliberation was so painfully absorbing that he did not feel the cold wind that whistled round his legs and against the buildings. On entering that house he must lay aside his name, as he already had laid aside the handsome garb of a noble. In case of disaster he would be unable to claim the privileges of his rank or the protection of his friends without destroying the Countess of Saint-Vallier. If her old husband suspected her of having a lover paying nocturnal visits, he was quite capable of roasting her alive in an iron cage by a slow fire, or of killing her by degrees in the depths of some dank dungeon.

Looking over his shabby clothes in which he was disguised, the young man felt ashamed of his appearance. His black leather belt, his heavy shoes, ribbed hose, frieze breeches, and his gray woolen doublet made him look like the clerk of some poor devil of a justice. To a nobleman of the fifteenth century it was like to death itself to play the part of a mean burgher, and renounce the privileges of his rank. But yet, to climb the roof of the house where his mistress was weeping; to descend the chimney or crawl along the cornice from gutter to gutter to the window of her room; to risk his life if haply he might sit by her side before a glowing fire, during the slumber of a dangerous husband, whose every snore would add to their rapture; to defy both heaven and earth in exchanging the most audacious embrace; to say no word which would not be the certainty of death, or at least of bloody combat, if overheard—these all-entrancing visions, with the romantic perils of the adventure, made the decision of the young man.

However slight the guerdon of his endeavor might be, could he but once more kiss the hand of his lady, he would

venture all, urged on by the peril-loving, passionate spirit of his age. Never for one moment did he think that the Countess would refuse him the sweetest reward of love in the midst of such mortal danger. The adventure was too perilous, too impossible, not to be attempted to carry out.

Suddenly every bell in the town rang out the curfew—a custom elsewhere fallen into desuetude, but still observed in the country—for in the provinces customs die slowly. Though the lights were not extinguished, the watchman placed the chains across the streets. Many doors were barred and bolted; the steps of a few belated citizens were heard in the distance, attended by their servants, armed to the teeth and bearing lanterns. Soon the town, garroted, as it were, seemed to be slumbering, fearing naught of robbers and malefactors except by the roofs. At that time the roofs of houses were like a highway, so thronged were they at night.

The streets were so narrow in the country towns, and even in Paris, that robbers could jump from the roofs on one side on to those of the other. This perilous game was once the delight of King Charles IX. in his youth, if we may put faith in the chronicles of his day.

Fearing that he might be too late in presenting himself to the old Maître Cornélius, the young noble now went up to the Malemaison, intending to knock at the door, when, on looking at it, his attention was excited by a kind of vision, which the writers of that day would have termed devilish (*cornue*), perhaps with reference to hords and hoofs. He rubbed his eyes to clear them, a thousand diverse ideas coursing through his mind the while at the spectacle before him. On each side of the door was a face framed between the bars in a kind of loophole. At first he took these faces to be grotesque gargoyles carved in stone, so angular, so distorted, exaggerated, motionless, and discolored were they; but presently the cold wind and the moonlight enabled him to detect the thin white mist which living breath sent out from two blue noses; at last he could make out in each hollow face, beneath the shadow of the eyebrows, a pair of blue china eyes casting fire like those of a wolf crouching in the brushwood when it hears the bay of the hounds in full cry. The uneasy gleam of those eyes was turned on him so fixedly that for quite a minute's space he felt like a bird put up by a pointer-dog; a fever-spasm struck his soul, but it was at once repressed. The two faces, strained and suspicious, were beyond a doubt those of Cornélius and his sister.

The young man pretended to be gazing around him, as if in uncertainty as to his whereabouts, and to be searching for a dwelling the address of which might be on the card he took from his pocket and was trying to read by the moonlight; then straight to the door he walked and struck three blows upon it, which echoed within as though it had been the entrance to a cavern. A faint light became visible beneath the door, and an eye was seen at a small and strongly barred wicket-gate.

"Who is there?"

"A friend, sent by Oosterlinck, of Brussels."

"What do you want?"

"To come in."

"Your name?"

"Philippe Goulenoire."

"Have you credentials?"

"Here they are."

"Put them in through the box."

"Where is it?"

"To your left."

Philippe Goulenoire put the letter through the slit of an iron box above which was a loophole.

"The devil!" thought he. "It is very evident that the King comes here, as they say he does; he could not take more precautions at Le Plessis."

For over a quarter of an hour he waited on the street. At the end of that time he heard the old man say to his sister—

"Close the traps of the door."

A clanging of chains sounded from within. Philippe heard the bolts slide, the locks creak, and finally a small, low door, iron-bound, opened just the smallest chink through which a man could press. At the risk of tearing his clothes, Philippe squeezed rather than walked himself into La Malemaison. A toothless old woman with a hatchet face, eyebrows like the handle of a caldron, who could not have put a nut between her nose and chin so near were they together—a pallid, haggard creature, her hollow temples made up only, or so it seemed, of bones and sinews—silently preceded the stranger into a lower chamber, Cornélius prudently following him.

"Seat yourself there," said she to Philippe, pointing out a three-legged stool, standing beside a huge, carved fireplace of stone; the hearth though was fireless.

On the other side of the fireplace was a walnut-wood table with twisted legs, on which were an egg on a plate and ten or a dozen of little bread-sops, hard and dry, each cut with parsimonious exactitude. Two stools placed beside the table, on one of which the old woman seated herself, showed that the miserly pair were about supping.

Cornélius went to the door and closed two iron shutters, thus most likely securing the looped windows through which they had been gazing out on the street; then he returned to his seat. Philippe Goulenoire, as he called himself, next saw the brother and sister dipping each their sops in turns into the egg, and with the perfect gravity and precision that soldiers use in dipping their spoons in regular rotation into the mess-pan. This performance was gone through in perfect silence. But as he ate Cornélius studied the mock apprentice with as much carefulness and shrewdness as if he had been gold coin in the balance.

Philippe felt, as it might be, an icy cloak had fallen on his shoulders, he was tempted to look around; but with the circumspection born of an amorous adventure he was careful not to glance, even furtively, at the walls, for he was well aware that so suspicious a person as Cornélius would not house an inquisitive inmate. He restricted himself to the modest contemplation of first the egg, then the old woman, and anon his future master.

Louis XI.'s silversmith-treasurer resembled that monarch. He had even caught the same tricks of expression, as often happens where persons dwell in a kind of quasi intimacy. The thick eyebrows of the Fleming almost concealed his eyes, but by raising them a little

he could flash out a glance that was bright, penetrating, and full of power, the look of men habituated to silence, and to whom concentration of thought is familiar. His thin lips, finely furrowed with vertical lines, gave him an air of keen subtlety. The lower part of the face bore a vague resemblance to a fox; but a lofty, prominent forehead, deeply indented with wrinkles, bespoke great and noble qualities and nobility of soul—one whose flights had been degraded by experience and whence the cruel lessons of life had driven it back into the farthest recesses of his strange humanity. Most certainly he was no ordinary miser; his passion covered, no doubt, the highest pleasures and secret conceptions.

"At what rate are Venetian sequins going?" he abruptly asked his to be apprentice.

"Three-fourths at Brussels; one at Ghent."

"What is the freight on the Scheldt?"

"Three sous parisis."

"Anything new in Ghent?"

"The brother of Liéven d'Herde is ruined."

"Ah!"

After giving vent to this exclamation, the old man spread the skirts of his dalmation over his knees—this was a sort of robe made of black velvet, open in front, wide sleeves, no collar, the sumptuous material being much worn and shiny. This corpse of a magnificent costume he had formerly worn as president of the tribunal of the Parchons—a position which had earned him the enmity of the Duke of Burgundy—was now but a mere rag.

Philippe was not cold, he perspired in the harness he had assumed, dreading further questioning. Thus far the brief information he had extracted the day before, from a Jew whose life he had saved, had been enough—thanks to his good memory and to the Jew's perfect understanding of the customs of Maître Cornélius and his habits and manners. But the young man, who in his first flush of enthusiasm had feared nothing now began to perceive the difficulties of his undertaking. The solemn, grave manner of the Fleming reacted upon himself; he felt himself under lock and key and remembered that the urbane Grand Provost Tristan and his rope obeyed the behest of Maître Cornélius.

"Have you supped?" asked the miser in a tone which implied an affirmative answer.

The old maid, despite her brother's tone, trembled as she looked at the new inmate, as if gauging the capacity of the stomach she might have to fill, then said with a specious grin:

"You do not belie your name; your hair and mustache are both black as the devil's tail."

"I have supped," said he.

"Well, then," replied the usurer, "you can come and see me again to-morrow. I have had no apprentice for a number of years. Beside, in the night comes wisdom."

"Hey! by Saint-Bavon, monsieur, I am from Flanders; I know not one soul in this place; the chains are up in the streets; I shall be thrown into prison. However," he went on, alarmed at his own temerity, "if it suits your good pleasure, of course I will go."

The oath had a singular effect on the old man.

"Come, then, by Saint-Bavon! You shall sleep here."

"But——" began his sister.

"Silence," said Cornélius. "In his letter Oosterlinck says that he will be answerable for this young man. You well know," he whispered in his sister's ear, "that we have a hundred thousand livres here belonging to Oosterlinck. Is that not security enough?"

"And suppose he steals the Bavarian jewels? He looks more like a thief than a Fleming."

"Hark!" said the old man, listening attentively.

The two misers listened. An instant after the "hark" uttered by Cornélius, a noise caused by men's footsteps echoed in the distance on the other side of the town moat.

"The guard of Le Plessis is on its rounds," said the sister.

"Give me the key to the apprentices' room," Cornélius continued.

The old woman was about to take up the lamp.

"What, do you mean to leave us alone together without a light?" exclaimed Cornélius in a voice eloquent with some hidden meaning. "Old as you are you ought to be able to see in the dark. It is not so difficult to find a key."

The sister evidently understood the meaning hidden in these words and left the room. As he looked at this singular creature, as she made her way toward the door, Philippe was able to hide the glance from Cornélius that he cast around the room. It was wainscoted halfway up with oak, the walls were hung with yellow leather stamped out with black arabesques; but what most struck the young man was a match-lock musket with its long spring dagger attached. This then new and terrible weapon lay close to Cornélius.

"How do you expect to earn your living with me?" asked the miser.

"I have but little money," said Philippe, "but I know some good business schemes. If you give me but one sou on every mark I make you, I shall be satisfied."

"A sou! a sou," spoke out the miser, "why, that's a great deal!"

At this time re-entered the old hag with the key.

"Come," said Cornélius to Philippe.

The pair went out beneath the portico and mounted a spiral stairway of stone, the circular well of which rose through a turret by the side of the room they had occupied. On the second floor the young man came to a stand.

"Nay, nay," cried Cornélius, "the devil! why, this is the cranny in which the King enjoys himself."

The architect had constructed the room used for the apprentices' lodging under the pointed roof of the turret up which the stairs wound. It was a little circular room, the walls of stone, cold and bare of ornament. The tower stood in the center of the façade on the courtyard, which was like all country courtyards—narrow and dark. At the farther end, through an iron grating, could be seen a wretched garden, in which only the mulberries grew that Cornélius had introduced. The young noble could take in these details through the loopholes of the turret, the moon, luckily, casting a brilliant light.

A cot, a stool, an unmatched pitcher and basin, and a flimsy chest comprised the furniture in the room. The light

could only enter through little square slits, placed at intervals in the wall of the tower, corresponding, no doubt, to the ornamentation of the outside.

"Here is your lodging," said Cornélius; "it is plain and substantial, and contains all that is needed for sleep. Good-night! Do not leave this room as the others did."

After giving his apprentice a last look fraught with divers meanings, Cornélius double-locked the door, took away the key and went down the stairs, leaving the young fellow as much befooled as a bell-founder who, on opening his mold, finds it empty. Alone, without a light, seated on a stool in this small garret-room from which so many of his predecessors had gone to the gallows, the young noble felt like a wild beast caught in a trap. He jumped on to the stool and stood on tiptoe to peer out of one of the little slits through which shone a faint glimmer of light. From thence he could see the Loire, the lovely slopes of Saint-Cyr, the somber splendor of Le Plessis, where a few lights were gleaming in the deep recesses of the windows. Farther away lay the beautiful meadows of Touraine and the silvery stream of the great river. Every point of this lovely landscape wore, just then, a mysterious charm; the windows, the waters, the roofs of the houses glistened like diamonds in the trembling rays of the moon.

The soul of the young noble could not altogether repress some tender, sweet, and sad emotions.

"Suppose this is my last farewell!" said he to himself.

As he stood there, he already felt the terrible emotion his adventure promised him; he yielded to the fears of a prisoner who still retains a gleam of hope. His mistress brightened each difficulty. To him she was no more a woman, she became a supernatural being seen in the incense vapors of his hot desire. A feeble cry, which seemed to come from the Hôtel de Poitiers, restored him to reason and to a realization of his situation. He threw himself on his bed to meditate on his course; soon he heard a slight rustling sound which came from the spiral staircase. He listened with all his ears, when the whispered words: "He is in bed," uttered by the old woman, came to his ear.

By an accident of which the architect was ignorant, the lightest sound on the stairway was echoed in the room of the apprentices, so the ostensible apprentice did not miss a single movement of the old miser and his sister, who were spying upon him. He undressed, got into bed, and pretended to sleep; during the time the couple remained on the stairs he was employed in devising means to escape his prison and his entry of the Hôtel de Poitiers.

About ten o'clock Cornélius and his sister, convinced that the new inmate was asleep, retired to their own rooms.

The young man paid careful attention to the sound they made in thus doing, and thought he could guess as to the rooms they each occupied; they must, he thought, occupy the whole of the second floor.

Like all the houses of that date, this floor was next below the roof, from which its dormer windows projected, which were adorned with tops of richly sculptured stone. The roof was bordered with a kind of balustrade, which con-

cealed the gutters for the descent of the rain-water which gargoyles, like crocodiles' heads, discharged into the street. The youth, who had so carefully studied his bearings like as a cat might cunningly have done, believed he could make his way from the tower to the roof, thence to Mme. de Vallier's room by the waterspouts and gargolyes; but he had not counted on the narrowness of the windows in the turret; it was a manifest impossibility that he could pass through them. He now made up his mind to get upon the roof of the house through the window of the staircase on the second story. To accomplish this bold project he must have egress from his room—and Cornélius had carried off the key!

The young noble had taken the precaution of bringing with him, concealed under his clothes, one of those poniards used at that time for dealing the *coup-de-grâce* in a duel, when the vanquished adversary begged the victor to dispatch him. This horrible weapon had one edge sharpened like a razor, and the other one was toothed like a saw, but the teeth running in the reverse direction to that by which it would enter the body in the thrust. The youth purposed to use this latter edge as a saw to cut the wood through around the lock. Happily for him the staple of the lock was attached to the outside of the door by four stout screws. By the help of his dagger he contrived, not without much difficulty, to unscrew and remove this altogether; he carefully laid aside the staple and the four screws, and proceeded down the stairs without his shoes to reconnoiter the locality. It was midnight when he was free.

He was quite astonished to discover a wide-open door to a corridor leading to several chambers, at the end of which passage was a window opening on to the V-shaped roof connecting the roofs of the Hôtel de Poitiers and the "evil house," which there met. Nothing could express his joy, unless it be the vow which he forthwith made to the Blessed Virgin to found a Mass in her honor at the noted parish church of the Escrignoles, at Tours.

After examining the vast, tall chimneys of the Hôtel de Poitiers, he retraced his steps to fetch his poniard; he saw, to his terror, a bright light upon the stairs, and Maître Cornélius himself in his dalmation, carrying a lamp, holding it out as far as possible, his eyes open to their fullest extent and fixed upon the corridor, at the entrance of which he stood still as a specter.

"If I open the window and jump out upon the roof, he will hear me," thought the young man.

But the terrible old man was coming on—coming like the hour of death upon the criminal. In this extremity Philippe, his wits quickened by love, recovered his presence of mind; he slipped into a doorway, squeezing himself into the angle of it, and awaited the old man's passing him. As soon as Cornélius, holding his lamp in advance, came into line with the current of air which the young man ejected from his lungs, the light was blown out.

Cornélius uttered a Dutch oath and muttered some vague phrases; but he turned around and retraced his footsteps. Then the noble hurriedly sought his room and the poniard, returned with the latter to his so blessed window

softly opened it, and sprang out upon the roof.

Once free and under the open sky, he felt weak, so deliriously happy was he. The excitement of the danger, or the audacity of his enterprise, caused his emotion; victory is to the full as perilous as the battle. He leaned against the parapet, quivering in his satisfaction, and said to himself:

"By which of these chimneys, now, can I get into her room?"

He looked at them all. With the instinct of a lover, he touched each in turn to judge by the feel in which there had been a fire. When his mind was made up on this point, the daring young man securely stuck his poniard in the joint between two stones, attached to it a silken ladder, threw the latter down the chimney, and then, trusting to his good blade and the chance of having selected the route to his mistress's room, without a tremor descended. He knew not whether Saint-Vallier was asleep or awake; but one thing he did know, and that was that he would embrace the Countess, even if it should be at the price of two men's lives.

Presently his feet touched warm embers; he gently trod them; more gently yet he stooped down and saw the Countess seated in an armchair.

And she saw him.

By the light of the lamp, the timid being, pale and palpitating with pleasurable emotions, pointed to the Comte de Saint-Vallier lying in bed, about ten feet away from her. You may suppose that their burning, silent kisses echoed only in their hearts.

The next day, about nine in the morning, as Louis XI. was leaving his chapel after attending Mass, he found Maître Cornélius in his path.

"Good-luck, crony," said he, straightening his cap in his usual jerky manner.

"Sire, I would willingly pay you a thousand gold crowns if I could have a moment's speech with your majesty; I have discovered the thief who stole the rubies and all the jewels of the Duke——"

"Let us hear about this," said Louis XI., going into the courtyard of Le Plessis, followed by his silversmith, Coyctier his physician, Olivier le Daim, and the captain of the Scottish Guard. "Tell me this business. Another man to hang for you! Halloo, Tristan!"

The grand provost, who was marching up and down the courtyard, came with slow steps, like a dog proud of his fidelity. The group paused under a tree. The King seated himself on a bench and the courtiers formed a circle around him

"Sire, a man pretending to be a Fleming has entrapped and got the better of me——" began Cornélius.

"Indeed, then he must be crafty," said the King, wagging his head.

"Yes, truly," answered the silversmith. "But methinks he would have snared even yourself. How should I distrust a poor beggar recommended to me by Oosterlinck, a man for whom I hold a hundred thousand livres? Nay, I will wager that the Jew's letter and seal were forged! In short, Sire, I found myself this morning robbed of those jewels you praised so admiringly. They have been ravished from me, Sire! To steal the jewels of the Elector of Bavaria! The scoundrels will stop at nothing! They'll steal your kingdom if you

don't look out. They respect no one!

"As soon as I missed the jewels I went up to the room of that apprentice, who is certainly a pastmaster in thievery. This time proof is not lacking. He had forced the lock of his door. The moon was down when he returned to his room, so he couldn't find all the screws. By good chance I trod upon one as I entered his room. He was sound asleep, the wretch, tired out. Just fancy, gentlemen, he climbed into my strong room by way of the chimney. To-morrow, or perhaps to-night, I'll make it hot for him though. We can always learn something from these villains. He had a silk ladder about him, and his clothes were marked with the dust of the roofs over which he had clambered, and the soot of the chimney down which he had descended. He intended remaining with me and robbing me night after night, the bold villain! But where has he hid the jewels? The countryfolk coming early into town saw him on the roof. He must have had accomplices, who waited for him on that dyke you made. Ah! Sire, you are the accomplice of fellows who come in boats; when, crack! they carry off everything and leave never a trace! But we hold this fellow, this leader, as a key, the horrid miscreant, the daring scapegrace. Ah! but he'll be a dainty morsel for the gibbet; with a screw or two of *questioning* beforehand, he will tell all. And the honor of your reign is concerned in it—is it not? There ought not to be robbers in the realm of so great a King."

But for long the King had ceased to listen. He had fallen into one of those gloomy meditations which became so frequent and ominous in the latter period of his life. A deep silence reigned.

"This is your business," said he at length to Tristan. "Search ye it out."

He rose, walked a few steps, and the courtiers left him alone. He then perceived Cornélius, who, mounted on his mule, was riding away in the company of the grand provost.

"And the thousand gold crowns?" shouted the King after him.

"Ah! Sire, you are too great a King? No sum can pay for your justice!"

Louis XI. smiled. The courtiers envied the old Fleming his bold speech and privileges, as he passed off at a good pace down the avenue of young mulberry trees leading from Tours to Le Plessis.

Exhausted with fatigue, the young seigneur was sleeping soundly. When he returned from his gallant adventure the spirit which had carried him through ceased to act in giving him the ability to defend himself against distant or imaginary dangers; he was no longer rashly pursuing anticipated joys. He postponed until the morrow the cleansing of his soiled garb; a great blunder to which all else conspired. It is true that the moon had failed him; through this he was unable to find all the screws belonging to the cursed lock, he was impatient. Then with the happy-go-lucky indifference of a tired man he trusted to chance which had served him so well. He did, indeed, make a bargain with himself to awake at the dawn, but the events of the day and the tumults of the night prevented his keeping the promise. Happiness is forgetful. Cornélius was no longer, so it seemed, formidable to him, as he flung himself down

on the truckle-bed where so many poor wretches had awoke to their doom. This recklessness was his ruin.

While the King's silversmith was returning from Le Plessis, in the company of the grand provost and his redoubtable bowmen, the pretended Goulenoire was being watched by the old sister, who was seated on the spiral stairs, knitting stockings and paying no heed to the cold.

The young man continued to dream of the ravishing enchantments of the charming night, in full ignorance of that danger which was rushing upon him at a hand-gallop. He saw himself on a cushion at the feet of the Countess, his head on her knees warm with affection's fire.

He was dreaming.

He listened to the story of her persecutions and the full details of the Count's petty tyranny; he swept over the lot of the unhappy lady, who was, in truth, the one natural daughter of Louis XI., who was best beloved by him. He promised her that to-morrow he would go to the King and reveal her wrongs to that terrible father; everything, he assured her, should be satisfactorily arranged as she might wish, the marriage annulled, the husband banished—while they themselves might be the victims of his sword, so perilously near, if the slightest noise should awaken him. But in his dreams, the gleam of the lamp, the flame of their eyes, the colors of the stuffs and draperies were more vivid, brighter than in reality; a more delightful perfume exhaled from their night-dresses; there was more of love on the air, more fire in the atmosphere than there had really been. The Marie of his dream did not so strongly resist his advances as the living Marie had done. The adoring glances, those tender entreaties, those adroit silences, those voluptuous solicitations, the affected generosity, which render the first moments of a passion so fiercely ardent, which arouse a fresh delirium at each new step toward love, were less objected to.

In obedience to the amorous jurisprudence of the period, Marie de Saint-Vallier granted her lover all the superficial privileges of the tender passion, *la petite oie*.[1] She willingly allowed him to kiss her feet, her robe, her hands, her throat; she avowed her love; she accepted his vows and attentions; she consented for him to die for her; she yielded to an intoxication which the rigor of her half-chasteness intensified; further than that she could not be induced to go—she made her deliverance the guerdon of the highest surrender to his love.

In order to have a marriage annulled, in those days, it was necessary to apply to Rome; to obtain the help of certain cardinals, and to personally appear before the sovereign pontiff armed with the approval of the King. Marie was firm in desiring to be free to love, that she might freely give it to the one she loved.

Almost every woman in those days had enough of power to establish her empire in the heart of a man in such manner as to make that passion the history of his life, the principle of his noblest resolves. Women were then a power in France, they were sovereigns;

[1]Lit.: the little goose.

they had noble pride; their lovers far more belonged to them than they to their lovers; their love was often the cause of bloodshed, but this must be faced to become a lover. But this Marie of his dream was gracious; she was deeply moved by her lover's devotion; she made but small defense against his vehement onslaught.

Which one was true? Did the false apprentice see the real woman in his dream? Was the lady he saw in the Hôtel de Poitiers only assuming virtue's mask? This question it is difficult to decide; it is too delicate; woman's honor demands, as it were, that it should remain unanswered.

At the instant that the Marie of the dream may have been about to forget her high dignity as his mistress, the lover found himself in the grasp of an iron hand, and the sharp tones of the grand provost, as he thus addressed him—

"Come, you Christian of midnight, who feel around the roofs for God, wake up, come!"

The young man saw the black face of Tristan d'Hermite above him; he recognized his sardonic leer; then on the steps of the corkscrew stairway he saw Cornélius and his sister, while beyond them were the provost guards. At that sight and noticing the diabolical visages, expressive of either hatred or curiosity of persons accustomed to hanging people, the whilom Philippe Gourlenoire sat up on his bed and rubbed his eyes.

"'Sdeath!" he exclaimed, seizing the poniard which was under his pillow. "Now is the time for our knives to play."

"Ho, ho!" cried Tristan, "that's the speech of a noble. It seemeth me that here is Georges d'Estouteville, nephew of the grandmaster of bowmen."

Hearing his real name uttered by Tristan, young d'Estouteville thought less of himself than of the danger his recognition would cause his unhappy mistress. To avert suspicion he cried out:

"By Mahomet's belly! help, help, comrades, help!"

After this terrible outcry, and made really in despair, the young courtier gave a bound, poniard in hand, and reached the landing on the stairs. But the myrmidons of the grand provost were well up in such games. As Georges d'Estouteville reached the stairs they most dexterously seized him, not at all alarmed at the vigorous lunges he made at them with his dagger, which, forunately for the man at whem it was aimed, slipped on his corselet. He was disarmed, his arms tied, and he was thrown on the bed before the provost, who stood motionless, thinking.

Tristan looked for a moment, without speaking, at the prisoner's hands; he scratched his chin and pointed Cornélius to them, and said:

"Those are no vagabond's hands, neither are they those of an apprentice. He is a noble."

"Say a thief, rather!" retorted the Fleming. "My good Tristan, whether noble or serf, he has undone me, the villain. I would that this moment I could see his feet warming in your pretty boots. Beyond any doubt he is the chief of that gang of invisible devils who know all my secrets, open my locks, rob me, kill me by inches. They are rich with my wealth, Tristan. Ah! this time, though, we will recover the

treasure, for this fellow has the face of the King of Egypt. I shall recover my so precious rubies, all the sums I have lost; our good King shall have his division of the spoil."

"Oh, our hiding-places are more secret than yours," said Georges, smiling.

"Ah, the damned villian, he confesses!" cried the miser.

The provost during this time had been carefully examining Georges's clothing and the lock of the door.

"How did you remove those screws?" asked Tristan.

Georges kept silent.

"Oh, all right; hold your tongue if you wish. You will soon confess to Saint Rackbones," said the provost.

"Now you talk business!" cried Cornélius.

"Away with him," said the grand provost.

Georges d'Estouteville asked permission to dress himself. On a sign from their chief the guard put on his clothing with the deft rapidity of a nurse who is changing a baby's dress during a moment's quietude.

An immense throng had assembled in the Rue du Mûrier. The growling increased with every moment, and had the sound of an incipient riot. Rumors of the theft had been prevalent since early morning. On all sides popular favor was aroused on behalf of the apprentice, who was said to be young and handsome; while the hatred against Cornèlius had revived afresh. There was not a young woman with fresh checks and pretty feet to exhibit, nor a mother's son in all the town, but was determined on seeing the victim. When Georges issued from the house there was a frightful uproar in the street, as he was seen led by one of the guard, who, after he had mounted his horse, kept the twisted end of the strong leathern thong that bound his prisoner's arms.

Whether it was that the mob merely wished to see this new victim, or whether rescue was intended, the people behind pushed those in front close upon the little squad of cavalry posted outside the Malemaison. At this time, Cornélius and his sister slammed the door and banged the shutters to with the violence of panic-terror. Tristan was not accustomed to respect the populace, as in those days they were not yet the "sovereign people," and cared but little for a probable riot.

"Push on! Push on!" he cried to his men.

At his voice the bowmen spurred their horses toward the end of the street. The crowd seeing a few persons knocked down and trampled by the horses, and others crushed up against the walls of the houses and nearly suffocated, took the wise course of returning to their homes.

"Make way for the King's justice!" cried Tristan. "What are you doing here? Do some of you want hanging, too? Go home, good people; your dinner is being burned. Here, my good dame, your husband's hose need mending; get off home and darn them, get back to your needles."

Though this jocular speech showed that the grand provost was in a good humor, the most obstreperous fled before him as if he were the Black Plague itself.

At the time the crowd began to give somewhat, Georges d'Estouteville was

astounded to see at one of the windows of the Hôtel de Poitiers his beloved Marie de Saint-Vallier, laughing with the Count. She was mocking at *him*, the poor devoted lover, who was going to his death for her. But, perhaps, she was only amused by seeing the caps of the populace knocked off by the spears of the bowmen.

One must be twenty-three years old, rich in illusions, fully able to believe in a woman's love, must love with all the power of our life, risking it with pleasure on the handsel of a kiss, and then be betrayed to comprehend the fury of hatred and despair which shook Georges d'Estouteville's heart at the sight of his laughing mistress, who only vouchsafed him a cold, indifferent glance. Without a doubt she had been there some time, for her arms rested on a cushion; she was quite at her ease and her old mountebank seemed content. He, too, was laughing—all curses on the hunchback!

A few tears ran from the young man's eyes; but when Marie saw them she hastily drew back. The tears, though, were suddenly dried when Georges beheld the red and white plumes of the page who was in his interest. The Count did not notice the movements of this cautious page, for he advanced to his mistress on tiptoe. After he had spoken a few words in her ear, Marie returned to the window. She managed to elude the watchful eye of her tyrant for a moment and cast upon Georges a look that was bright with the fires of love—and the triumph of having so skillfully deceived her Argus—a glance that seemed to say:

"I am watching over you."

Had she cried aloud these words to him, she could not more have impressed them upon his hearing; that glance was full of a thousand thoughts, it was charged with the terrors, hopes, pleasure, of their situation. He had passed in that one second from heaven to martyrdom, from martyrdom back to heaven! So, then, this brave young man, light-hearted and content, walked gayly to his doom; he adjudged the horrors of the grim "question" but a small price for the rapture of his love.

As Tristan was turning off the Rue due Mûrier, his men halted as an officer of the Scottish Guard rode toward them at full tilt.

"What is to do?" asked the provost.

"Naught concerning you," replied the officer, scornfully. "The King sends me to summon the Comte and Comtesse de Saint-Vallier, whom he bids dine with him."

The grand provost had barely reached the quay of Le Plessis when the Count and Countess, both riding, he on his horse, she on a white mule, and followed by their pages, joined the bowmen, intending to enter Plessis-le-Tours in their company. All were moving slowly. Georges was on foot between two mounted guards, one of whom still held him by the leathern thong.

Tristan, the Count, and his wife naturally led the van; the criminal followed them. The young page mingled with the bowmen and questioned them, at times addressing the prisoner; he contrived with some cunning to say to him in a low voice:

"I got over the garden-wall of Le Plessis and took a missive to the King from madame. She was nearly dying

when she learned of your arrest for theft. Be of good courage. She now goes to the King to speak for you."

Already had love given wiliness and courage to the Countess. The laughter she had forced was part of the heroism women can display in the great crises of life.

Despite the singular fancy which possessed the author of *Quentin Durward* to place the royal château of Pressisle-Tours on an eminence, we must content ourselves in leaving it where it really was situated, that is, on the low land, protected on either side by the Cher and the Loire; also by the Canal Sainte-Anne, so named in honor of his well-loved daughter, Mme. du Beaujeu. By uniting the two rivers between Tours and Le Plessis, this canal served as a formidable further protection to the castle, and was also valuable as a highway for commerce. On that side toward Bréhémont, a broad, fertile plain, the park was inclosed by a moat, the remains of which still show its extent and depth.

At a period when the power of artillery was still in embryo, the position of Le Plessis, long the favorite retreat of Louis XI., might be considered impregnable. The Château, built of brick and stone, was in no way remarkable; but surrounding it were noble trees, and from its windows could be seen through the well-arranged vistas[1] the loveliest views imaginable. No rival place was to be found near this solitary castle, which stood in the very center of the little plain reserved for the King and guarded by four streams of water.

[1] *Plexitium*

If tradition may be relied upon, Louis XI. occupied the west wing, and from his chamber could see at one glance the course of the Loire, the pretty valley watered by the Croisville, and some part of the slopes of Saint-Cyr. From the windows opening on the courtyard he could see the entrance to his fortress and the dyke by which he had connected his favorite residence with the city of Tours. The suspicious disposition of the King gives much weight to this tradition. It is certain that had Louis XI. bestowed upon the building of his castle the luxury of architecture which François I. afterward displayed at Chambord, the royal residence of France would always have remained in Touraine. This lovely spot and exquisite scenery need only to be seen to at once establish its superiority over all other royal residences in the fair realm of France.

Louis XI., now in his fifty-seventh year, had scarcely more than three years of life before him; already he began to feel death's approach by many attacks of that illness which was to prove mortal; delivered from his enemies; on the point of adding to his territories by absorbing the possessions of the duchy of Burgundy, through the marriage of the Dauphin and Marguerite, the sole heiress of that dukedom—which marriage was arranged by Desquerdes, the captain-general of his army in Flanders; having established his authority throughout his realm; now meditating ameliorations and improvements of every description in the kingdom, he found time slipping from his grasp, no troubles remaining to him save those of old age Deceived by everyone. even by the

minions nearest him, experience had increased his natural distrust. The desire to live had become in him the egotism of a king who has become incarnate in his subjects; he craved long life in which to carry out vast designs.

Everything that the common sense of statesmen of spirit or the genius of revolution has since introduced of change in the monarchy, Louis XI. had devised. Equality of taxation, and of people before the law—the Sovereign being then the Law—were the objects for which he endeavored. On the eve of All-Saints' he had gathered together the learned goldsmiths of France for the purpose of establishing in his kingdom a system of uniform weights and measures. He had already established a uniform power. Thus his great spirit soared like an eagle above his realm, joining, singular but true, the prudence of a king to the idosyncrasies of a man of genius.

At no period of our history has Monarchy's figure been greater or more majestic. Amazing contrast! A great mind in a frail body; an unbelieving spirit as concerned the mundane, a devout believer in all the practices of religion; a man struggling against two powers greater than his own—the present, the future; the future in which he dreaded eternal torment, a fear causing him to sacrifice largely to the Church; the present, his own life, for the saving of which he was the slave of Coyctier. This King, who could crush all about him, was himself crushed by remorse, by disease, in the midst of that mysterious poem—the combat of Man in his highest manifestations of power tilting against nature.

It was stupendous, it was impressive.

While awaiting his dinner, which, in those days, was partaken between eleven o'clock and noon, Louis XI., after a short walk, sat down in a large, tapestried chair near the fire in his private chamber. Olivier le Daim and Coyctier, the leech, looked at each other without a word, standing in a window recess and watching their master, who was sleeping. The only sound to be heard was the steps of the two chamberlains as they paced back and forth in the anteroom, the Sire de Montrésor and Jean Dufou, sire de Montbazon. These two seigneurs of Touraine kept an eye on the captain of the Scottish Guard, who, according to his usual custom, was sleeping in his chair.

The King seemed to be dozing. His head drooped upon his breast; his cap, pulled forward over his forehead, hid his eyes. Thus, seated on his high chair of State, which was surmounted by a crown, he seemed, huddled up as he was, like a man who had fallen asleep while engaged in some profound meditation.

At this moment Tristan and his followers crossed the bridge of Sainte-Anne over the canal, about two hundred feet from the entrance to Le Plessis.

"Who goes there?" asked the King.

The courtiers, in surprise, looked at each other inquiringly.

"He is dreaming," said Coyctier in a low voice.

"Pasques-Dieu!" cried Louis XI. "Do you think I'm a fool? People are now crossing the bridge. To be sure I am sitting near the chimney, and I may hear more clearly than you. This

effect of nature might be made useful," he thoughtfully added.

"What a man!" said le Daim.

Louis XI. arose and walked toward one of the windows looking over the town. He saw the grand provost and exclaimed:

"Ha, Ha! here come my old crony and his thief. And there, too, is my little Marie de Saint-Vallier; I had forgotten all about that. Olivier," he continued to the barber, "go at once and tell M. de Montbazon to serve us some good Bourgueil wine at dinner, and mind the cook forgets not the lampreys. Mme. la Comtesse likes those of all things. May I eat lampreys?" he added after a pause, glaring uneasily at Coyctier.

For all answer the physician commenced to examine his master's face. The two men were a picture.

Historians and romanticists have consecrated the brown camlet large coat, with breeches of the same material, worn by Louis XI. His cap, decorated with pewter medallions, his collar of the order of Saint Michael are not less known; but no writer, no painter, has ever depicted the visage of that terrible monarch in his last years; sickly, hollow, yellow, brown, every feature of which was expressive of sour cunning and cold sarcasm. This mask had the brow of a noble man, a forehead furrowed with wrinkles, weighty with deep thoughts; but on his lips and cheeks was a something indescribably low and vulgar. Looking at certain details of that countenance you might have thought him a debauched vine-grower or a miserly tradesman; but then, above these resemblances and the decrepitude of a dying old man, could vaguely be seen the King, the man of power, the man of action, arising supreme. His pale yellow eyes seemed extinct of sight; but a spark of courage and wrath lurked within; at the slightest friction it could burst into flame and cast about consuming fires.

The physician was a stout burglar with a florid face, dressed in black, peremptory, greedy of gain, of much self-importance.

These two personages were framed, so to say, in that paneled chamber of walnut-wood, hung about with tapestry of Flanders; the ceiling was of carved beams and dingy with smoke.

The furniture, the bed, all inlaid with arabesques of polished pewter, would to-day seem more valuable than they were at that time when the arts were just exploiting their numberless masterpieces.

"Lampreys are not good for you," replied the physician.

(This title *le physicien,* but recently substituted for the former term *maître myrrhe,* is still applied to the faculty in England. The name was at that time almost universally used in France.)

"What then may I eat?" asked the King humbly.

"Widgeon in salt. Otherwise, you have so much bile moving that you might die on All-Souls' Day."

"To-day!" cried the King, terrified.

"Be composed, Sire," answered Coyctier. "Do not fret your mind; try and amuse yourself some."

"Ah!" said the King, "my daughter Marie used to succeed in that difficult business."

As he spoke, Imbert de Basternay, Sire de Montrésor, and de Bridoré,

softly knocked on the royal door. By the King's permission he entered and announced the Comte and Comtesse de Saint-Vallier. Louis nodded a sign. Marie appeared, followed by her aged husband, who had to allow her to precede him.

"Good-day, my children," said the King.

"Sire," replied the lady in a whisper, as she embraced him, "I would speak secretly with you."

Louis made as thought he had not heard her.

"Dufou, holà!" he cried in a hollow voice, turning to the door.

Dufou, Lord of Montbazon, grand cupbearer of France, entered in haste.

"Go to the steward; tell him I must have widgeon salted for dinner. Then to Mme. de Beaujeu, inform her that I dine alone to-day. Do you know, madame," continued the King, pretending to some feeling, "that you neglect me. It is nearly three years since I saw you. Come, come hither, pretty one," he added, sitting down and holding out his arms to her. "How thin you have become! Why have you allowed her to get so thin? Eh?" he ejaculated, turning to the Count de Poitiers.

The jealous husband cast so frightened a look at his wife that she almost pitied him.

"It's happiness, Sire," replied he.

"Ah! you love each other too much, do you?" said the King, holding his daughter between his knees. "I was right in calling you Marie-pleine-de-Grace. Coyctier, leave us! Now, what do you want of me?" he asked his daughter, as soon as he saw the physician was gone. "After sending me your——"

In this so great danger Marie audaciously placed her hand on the King's lips and whispered in his ear:

"I always thought you cautious and quick-witted——"

"Saint-Vallier," said the King, laughing, "I think Bridoré has something he wishes to say to you."

The Count left the room; but he made a gesture with his shoulder, well known to his wife, who could guess the thoughts of this jealous man, and realized that she must guard against his malignancy.

"Tell me, child, how you think I am looking? Have I changed much, eh?"

"Do you want the truth, my lord? Or must I only speak you fair?"

"No," said he in a husky tone of voice, "I want to know where I am."

"In that case you look but poorly to-day. I trust, though, that my veracity mars not my cause's success."

"What is your cause?" asked the King, frowning and passing one hand over his forehead.

"Ah! Sire," she replied, "the young man that you have had arrested in the house of your silversmith, Maître Cornélius, and who is now a prisoner to the grand provost, is innocent of theft."

"How know you this?" asked the King.

Marie hung her head and blushed.

"I need not ask if there is love at the bottom of this business," said the King gently, and stroking his chin, while he raised his daughter's face. "If you do not confess every morning, child, you will go to hell."

"Cannot you oblige me without questioning my secret thoughts?"

"Where were the pleasure in that?" exclaimed the King, seeing a chance of some amusement in this affair.

"Ah! but would you have pleasure at the cost of my sorrow?"

"Oh! you sly puss, you; won't you give me your confidence, then?"

"So, then, my Lord, set that young noble free."

"Oh, oh! he is a nobleman, is he?" cried the King. "Then he is not an apprentice?"

"He is certainly innocent," said she.

"I do not so see it," replied the King coldly. "I am the supreme judge in my kingdom; it is my duty to punish malefactors."

"Come, put not on that solemn face of yours! Grant to me the life of that young man."

"Would not that be giving back your own?"

"Sire," said she, "I am pure and virtuous. You do but jest——"

"Then," said Louis XI., interrupting her, "if you cannot show me my way, I must get the light of Tristan upon it." Marie de Sassenage turned pale; she made a violent effort; she said:

"Sire, let me assure you that should you do this, you will afterward regret it. The so-called thief has stolen nothing. If you will but grant me his pardon, I will tell you all, even though you should visit it on me."

"Oh, oh! this is becoming serious," exclaimed the King, as he pushed up his cap. "Speak, child."

"Well," said she in a low voice in her father's ear, "he was in my room all night."

" He may have been there and yet robbed Cornélius; a double larceny."

"Sire, I have your blood in my veins—I was not born to love a scoundrel. That young noble is the nephew of the captain-general of your bowmen."

"Well, well!" cried the King, "you are hard to confess."

At these words the King pushed his daughter off his knee, hurried to the door of the room, but softly and on tiptoe, making no sound. A moment ago the light from the window in the outer room, shining in the space beneath the door, had traced the shadow of a listener's foot projected slightly on the floor of his room. He abruptly opened the iron-bound door and surprised the Comte de Sait-Vallier eavesdropping.

"Pasques-Dieu!" he exclaimed, "such insolence deserves the ax."

"My liege," said Saint-Vallier boldly, "I would rather the ax were at my neck than that the ornament of the married were on my head."

"You may yet have both," said Louis XI. "Not a man of the lot of you is safe from such a misfortune, my lords, all. Go into the outer hall. Conyngham," continued the King, addressing the Scottish captain, "you were asleep, eh? Where, then, is M. de Bridoré? Why do you thus allow me to be invaded? *Pasques-Dieu,* the meanest burgher in Tours is better served than his King."

After venting his anger Louis re-entered the room; but he was careful to draw the tapestry curtains, which formed a second door, intended less for the stoppage of the whistling, harsh winds than for the stifling of the King's words.

"So, my daughter," said he, amusing himself with teasing her as a cat does with a mouse, "Georges d'Estouteville was your lover last night?"

"Oh, no, Sire?"

"No? Ah! by Saint-Carpion! he deserves death. Did the villain then not think my daughter fair enough?"

"Oh! that's not the way of it," said she. "He kissed my feet and hands with such ardor as might have melted the most virtuous wife. He loves me truly and in all honor," she added.

"Then do you mistake me for Saint-Louis, that I should believe such nonsense? A young fellow made like his is, to risk his life just to kiss your little slippers or your sleeve? Tell that to someone else!"

"But aye, my lord, it is true! Still he came for another reason."

Having uttered these words, Marie felt that she had endangered her husband's life, for Louis eagerly asked:

"For what?"

The adventure amused him much. He certainly did not anticipate the strange confidences his daughter now made him after she had stipulated for her husband's pardon.

"Oh, ho! M. de Saint-Vallier. So you would even dare to shed the royal blood!" cried the King, his eyes blazing with fury.

At this moment the bell of Le Plessis rang the hour of dinner and the escort of the King to arms. Leaning on his daughter's arm, Louis XI. appeared with lowering brow on the threshold of his Chamber, and there found his guard in attendance. He glanced ambiguously at the Comte de Saint-Vallier as he was thinking up the sentence he meant to pronounce on him.

The deep silence which reigned was presently broken by Tristan's footsteps as he ascended the grand stairway. The grand provost entered the hall, and, advancing toward the King, said:

"Sire, the affair is settled."

"What, is it all over?" said the King.

"Our man is in the hands of the monks. He confessed the theft after a screw of the 'question.'"

The Countess sighed and turned pale; she was unable to utter a word, she could only gaze at the King. That look was observed by Saint-Vallier, who muttered in an undertone:

"I am betrayed! The thief is acquainted with my wife."

"Silence!" commanded the King. "Someone there is here who tires my patience. At once, and stop the execution," he added, addressing the grand provost. "Your own body will answer for that of the criminal, my too prompt friend! This affair must be thoroughly sifted, I purpose the doing of it myself. Set the prisoner at large provisionally; I can always recover him; these robbers have hiding-places that they love, lairs where they lurk. Let it be made known to Cornélius that to-night I go to his house to conduct the inquiry. M. de Saint-Vallier," said the King, fixing his eyes on the Count, "I know of your doings. All the blood in your body could not pay for one drop of mine; dost understand? By our Lady of Cléry! You have committed *lèse-majesté*. Did I give you so sweet a wife that you should make her pale and haggard? To your house at once,

there make ready preparations for a long journey."

The mere habit of cruelty made the King pause at these words; then he added:

"To-night you set forth to Venice to attend to my business with that government. You need have no anxiety about your wife; she will abide with me at Le Plessis; she certainly should be safe here. From this on I shall watch over her with greater care than I have done since I married her to you."

When she heard these words, Marie silently pressed her father's arm as though thanking him for his clemency and good grace. As for Louis XI., he was laughing in his sleeve.

Louis XI. was particularly fond of interfering in the domestic concerns of his subjects, and he was ever ready to mingle his royal majesty in bourgeois life. This taste, sincerely blamed by some historians, was really but a passion for the *incognito*, one of the greatest relaxations of princes—a kind of temporary abdication, enabling them to put a dash of spice into their existence which becomes insipid for the lack of opposition. Louis XI., however, played his *incognito* without disguise. On such occasions he was always the "good-fellow," endeavoring to please the middle-class whom he thus made his allies against grim feudality. It was some time now since he had found an opportunity of "making himself popular," or taking up the defense of some person *engarrié*, an old term still surviving in Tours and meaning petty litigation, so that he vehemently entered into the secret sorrows of Maître Cornélius, as also into his anxieties.

Several times during dinner he said to his daughter:

"Who, think you, can have robbed my old crony? His losses from theft now amount to over twelve hundred thousand crowns' worth of jewels, this in eight years. Twelve hundred thousand crowns, my lords!" he went on, looking round at the gentlemen-in-waiting. "By our lady! with such a sum a great many absolutions may be bought at Rome. *Pasques-Dieu*, with such a sum of money I could have built the bank along the Loire, or, still better, have conquered Piedmont; a fine buffer all ready constructed for our kingdom."

When dinner was ended, Louis XI. led away his daughter, the physician, and the grand provost, with an escort of men-at-arms, to the Hôtel de Poitiers, where he found, as he expected, the Comte de Sait-Vallier awaiting his wife, most likely to make away with her.

"Monsieur," said the King, "my instructions were for your immediate departure. Bid farewell to your wife, and at once proceed to the frontier; you will be accompanied by an escort of honor. As to your instructions and credentials, they will be in Venice before yourself."

Louis issued his orders, not forgetting to add certain secret instructions to a lieutenant of the Scottish Guard, to take a squad of men and attend the King's envoy to Venice. Saint-Vallier departed in haste, after giving a cold kiss to his wife, which he would have been pleased had it been fatal to her.

When the Countess had retired to

her chamber, Louis XI. crossed over to the Malemaison, eager to begin the unraveling of the dismal farce, lasting, as it had done, for eight years, in the house of his silversmith. He flattered himself that being the King he could exercise enough penetration to discover the mystery of the robberies. Cornélius did not look upon the advent of this numerous retinue without forebodings of woe.

"And are all these people to take part in the inquiry?" he asked the King.

Louis could not refrain from smiling at the evident fright of the old miser and his sister.

"No, crony," said he; "don't worry yourself, they will sup with us at Le Plessis; you and I will alone go into the matter. I am so excellent an investigator that I will wager ten thousand crowns with you that I can find the criminal."

"Never mind the wager, Sire; just find him."

They went at once into the strong-room in which the Fleming kept his treasures. There King Louis, who first asked to see the casket whence the Duke of Burgundy's jewels had been abstracted, and then the chimney down which the robber was supposed to have come, easily proved to the silversmith the falseness of the latter supposition, inasmuch as there was no sign of soot upon the hearth—where, of a truth, a fire was but seldom kindled—and no trace of anything having descended the flue. Moreover, that the chimney issued at a portion of the roof that was practically inaccessible.

After two hours of close investigation, marked with that sagacity which distinguished the suspicious nature of Louis XI., it was proved to a demonstration that no one had forced an entrance into the treasury. No marks of violence showed upon the locks, inside or out, nor on the iron coffers used to contain the gold, silver, and jewels hypothecated by wealthy debtors.

"If the thief opened this box," said the King, "why did he take nothing more than the Bavarian jewels? What reason had he for leaving this pearl necklace lying beside them? A queer robber!"

At this remark the wretched miser turned deathly pale; the King and he eyed each other for a moment.

"Then, my liege, for what did that robber come here whom you have taken under your protection? And, also, why was he prowling around at night?"

"If you have not guessed oh! my crony, I command you to remain in ignorance. That is a secret of my own."

"Then I am haunted of the devil!" cried the usurer lamentably.

Under any other circumstances the King would have laughed at his silversmith's cry; but in place of this he was studious and thoughtful; he was now casting on the Fleming a scrutiny peculliar to men of genius and force, penetrating to the brain. Cornélius was alarmed; he thought he must have, in some way, offended his dangerous master.

"Be it devil or angel, I'll have him, the criminal," the King abruptly exclaimed. "Should you be robbed to-night, to-morrow I will know who did it. Summon that old hag, your sister," he added.

Cornélius slightly hesitated at leav-

ing the King alone in his treasure chamber; but the stern smile that curled Louis's withered lips compelled him. He, nevertheless, hastened to return, followed by the old woman.

"Have you any flour?" demanded the King.

"Oh, yes; we have laid in our winter supply," she answered.

"Well, go and fetch some," said the King.

"What, then, would you be doing with our flour, Sire?" she exclaimed in alarm, and not impressed in the least by the King's august majesty.

"Old fool! do you as our gracious liege commands," cried Cornélius. "And shall the King lack flour?"

"My good flour!" grumbled she, as she descended the stairs. "Is this what I buy fine flour for?"

Then she returned and said to the King:

"Is it, Sire, only a royal fancy to examine my flour?"

Finally she reappeared, this time carrying one of those coarse flax-sacks, which from time immemorial have been used in Touraine to fetch and carry provisions to and from the market—nuts, fruit, or grain. The bag was half full of flour. The housewife opened it and showed it to the King, casting a viperous, venomous glance with which old maids, as one may say, seem to squirt venom on a man.

"It costs six sous the *septerée* or measure," said she.

"What, then, does that matter?" said the King. "Spread it upon the floor, but do it carefully so that it may be evenly strewn—as if it had been a light fall of snow."

But the old maid comprehended him not. This order dismayed her more than though the end of the world had come.

"My flour, Sire!—on the ground! But —why——"

Maître Cornélius was vaguely beginning to understand the intent of the King's doings. He grasped the sack and gently spread its contents on the floor. The old woman shuddered, but she extended her hand for the empty bag, and when it was given her by her brother disappeared step by step with a profound sigh.

Cornélius took a feather-duster and carefully smoothed over the flour till it lay like a sheet of snow; as he did this he stepped backward, the King before him, who seemed much amused over the proceedings. When they reached the door Louis XI. said to Cornélius:

"Are there two keys to the lock?"

"No, Sire."

The King carefully examined the structure of the door, which was heavy and strengthened with plates of iron and strong bars of the same, all of which latter converged to a secret lock, the key of which Cornélius only possessed.

After scrutinizing everything thoroughly the King sent for Tristan; him he ordered to set a watch at night with the greatest circumspection and secrecy in the mulberry trees on the embankment and on the roofs of the adjoining houses; first, though, to assemble at once the rest of his command and escort him back to Le Plessis, so that it might appear that the King did not stay to sup with Cornélius. Then he told the miser to close his windows with extreme care, so that not a single ray of light might escape through them, and to give orders

that he be served with a light repast to continue the deception. Then the King departed in much pomp for Le Plessis by way of the embankment, and privately returned with only two of his suite to the house of the *torçonnier.* These precautions were so well taken and carried out that the good folk of Tours and the courtiers really believed that the King had returned to Le Plessis, and that he was to sup on the morrow with Maître Cornélius. The miser's sister still further confirmed this by buying some green-sauce from the best maker, who had a store near the *quarroir aux herbes,* afterward known as the *carroir de Beaune,* in honor of a splendid white marble fountain which was sent from Italy as an ornamentation for the capital of his province by Jacques de Beaune.

About eight o'clock that evening, as the King was supping with his physician, Cornélius, and the captain of the Scottish Guard, conversing jollily and forgetting for the nonce that he was Louis XI., ill and in danger of death, profound silence was without, and all passers, even the cleverest thief, might have taken it that the house was uninhabited by any but its usual inmates.

"I hope," said the King, laughing, "that my chum the silversmith may this night be robbed, so shall my curiosity be satisfied. See to it, my lords, that no one leaves his chamber to-morrow morning without my order under pain of condign punishment."

Thereupon all went to bed.

The next morning Louis XI. was the first to leave his chamber, and he at once proceeded to the door of the treasury. He was more than astonished to see, as he went along, the imprint of a large foot along the stairway and corridors of the house. He carefully avoided these so precious footmarks, but traced them to the door of the miser's closet; this he found locket and without any sign of violence or fracture. He examined the direction of the steps, but they became gradually fainter and ultimately left not the faintest trace; it was therefore impossible to discover whither the robber had escaped.

"Ha! crony," cried the King to Cornélius, "you have been robbed most excellently this time, for sure!"

At these words the old Fleming, terrified out of his senses, hurried out. Louis XI. made him look at the footprints on the pavements, and while again examining himself for the second time, the King by chance observed the old man's slippers and there recognized the shape of the sole of which so many copies were spread before him on the stairs. He said not a word and restrained his laughter, for he remembered the number of innocent men who had been hanged for this.

Cornélius now hurried to his treasures. When he was in the room the King caused him to make a new mark alongside those already there, and he soon proved to him that the thief of his treasure was none other than himself.

"The pearl necklace is missing? There is sorcery in this," cried Cornélius. "I never left my room."

"We'll soon learn as to that, now," said the King, the evident sincerity of the silversmith quite mystifying him.

He at once summoned the men of the watch and asked—

"Marry, now, what saw you during the night?"

"Ah, Sire!" said the lieutenant, "a most amazing sight! Your majesty's silversmith crept down by the side of the wall like a cat; so lightly withal that he seemed but a specter."

"I?" exclaimed Cornélius; this one word he uttered, then remained silent, and stood stock-still and rigid like a man who has lost all use of his limbs.

"Begone now, all of you," said Louis, addressing the bowmen, "and tell Messieurs Conyngham, Coyctier, Bridoré, and also Tristan to leave their rooms and come here at once to mine. You have incurred the penalty of death," said he to Cornélius, who very happily did not hear him. "You have ten such on your soul!"

Thereupon the King grimly, but noiselessly, laughed, then paused. But as he remarked the strange pallor that overspread the old man's face, he said:

"Be not uneasy; you are more valuable to bleed than to kill. You may escape the fangs of *my* justice in consideration of a good round sum paid into my treasury by you; but, mark you, if you build not at least one chapel to the Virgin, you are more than like to find that things are made hot for you throughout all eternity."

"Twelve hundred and thirty and eighty-seven thousand crowns make thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns," replied Cornélius, absorbed in his calculations. "Thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns hidden—where?"

"He must have buried them in some hiding-place," muttered the King, who began to think the sum royally magnificent. "That was the lodestone that ever attracted him back to Tours. He smelt his gold."

At this moment entered Coyctier. Noticing the attitude of Maître Cornélius, he scrutinized him keenly, the while Louis XI. narrated the adventure.

"My liege," replied the physician, "there is naught of the supernatural in this. Your silversmith is a sleep-walker. This is the third case I have come across of this so singular malady. If you would amuse yourself by watching him at such times, you might see the old hulks stepping without danger on the verge of the parapet to the roof. In two other cases I have already studied, I could observe a curious connection between the actions of the nocturnal existence and the interests and occupations of daily life in which they were engaged."

"Ah! Maître Coyctier, you are indeed most wise."

"Am I not then, your physician?" he insolently retorted.

On hearing this reply, Louis XI. made a slight gesture habitual with him when a good idea struck him—he hastily shoved up his cap.

"At such times," continued Coyctier, "persons transact their business when asleep. As this friend of ours is fond of hoarding, he has simply carried out his darling hobby. He would most probably have an attack when, during the day, he has felt much alarm for the safety of his treasure."

"*Pasques-Dieu!* and such a treasure!" exclaimed the King.

"Where is it?" asked Cornélius, who, by a singularity of our nature, heard all the remarks of the King and his physician, while yet practically in a state of

torpor, caused by thought and the shock of his misfortune.

"Ah!" cried Coyctier, with a diabolically coarse laugh, "somnambulists never have recollection of their acts when they awake."

"Leave us," said the King.

When Louis XI. was alone with Cornélius, he glanced at him and ejaculated a cold chuckle.

"Be it known, Worshipful Master Hoogworst," said he, bowing ironically low, "all treasure-trove in France is the property of the King."

"Yes, my liege, all is yours; you are the absolute master of our lives and fortunes; but thus far you have been merciful, and have only taken what you needed."

"Listen to me, old crony mine; if I assist you in recovering this lost treasure, you can surely, in all confidence and without fear, agree to divide it with me."

"No, Sire, I will not divide it; I will give it all to you at my death. But what scheme have you for finding it?"

"I myself will watch you when you take your nocturnal walks. You doubtless would fear to trust any but me."

"Ah! Sire," exclaimed Cornélius, flinging himself at the King's feet, "you are the only man in the kingdom whom I would trust in such service; and I shall try to prove my gratitude for your goodness to your so humble servant, by doing my utmost to promote the marriage of the heiress of Burgundy with Monseigneur the Dauphin. She indeed would bring you a noble treasure, not of crown-pieces, to be sure, but of lands which would round off your dominions to their greater glory."

"Pshaw, Dutchman, you think to hoodwink me!" said the King, his brow growing threatening, "or you have hitherto played me false."

"Nay, Sire, can you then doubt my devotion—you the only man I love?"

"Words, words!" retorted the King, turning to face the miser, and looking him in the eye. "You ought not to have waited for this moment to be of use to me. You are selling me your influence —*Pasques-Dieu!* to me—Louis XI. Are you, then, the master? Am I the servant? I wish to know."

"Ah! Sire," said the old man, "I was but waiting to surprise you most agreeably with the news of arrangements I had made for you in Ghent; I was looking for confirmation of it from Oosterlinck through that apprentice. What has become of him?"

"Enough!" said the King. "This is but a blunder the more. I do not like that persons should interfere, uncalled for, in my affairs. Enough! leave me; I must think it all out."

Maître Cornélius found the agility of youth to fly to the lower rooms where he made sure of finding his sister.

"Ah! Jeanne, dear soul, we have a hoard hidden somewhere in this house; I have put away thirteen hundred thousand crowns in jewels somewhere. I—I —I am the thief."

Jeanne Hoogworst rose from her stool and stood erect as if the seat had been red-hot iron.

The shock was so violent for an old maid, accustomed as she was to reduce herself by voluntary privations and fasts, that she trembled in every limb; horrible pains seized her back. By degrees her paleness increased, and her face—the

wrinkles of which made any change difficult to discover—became quite distorted while her brother told her the malady to which he was a victim, and the perplexing situation in which he was placed.

"King Louis XI. and I," said he in conclusion, "have just been lying to each other like two miracle-mongers. You see, child, if he watches me, he will learn the secret place of my hidden treasure. Only the King may watch my nightly wanderings. I am not so sure that his conscience, near as he is to death, could withstand the temptation of thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns. We must be beforehand with him; *we* must find this nest and send the treasure to Ghent, and you alone——"

Cornélius stopped suddenly short; he seemed to be weighing the heart of his sovereign, who at twenty-two years of age had dreamed of parricide. When he made up his mind about Louis XI., he rose abruptly like a man in haste to escape a pressing danger. At this moment his sister, too weak or too strong for such a crisis, fell stark; she was dead.

Maître Cornélius raised her and shook her with violence, saying:

"This is no time for dying. You will have time enough for that later on. Oh! it's all over. Old hag, she never could do the right thing at the right time."

He closed her eyes and laid her on the floor. But then the good and noble feelings which lay cumbered over in his heart came back to him, and, almost forgetting his hidden treasure, he pathetically cried:

"Ah! my poor companion, have I really lost you? You who understood me so well! Oh! you were my real treasure. There, there, lies my real treasure! With you goes my peace of mind, my affections—all are gone. If only you had known what good it would have done me for you to have lived two days longer, you would surely have remained alive, if only to please me, my poor sister. Ah! Jeanne! thirteen hundred thousand crowns! Won't that wake you? No, she is indeed dead!"

Thereupon he sat down and said no more; but two great tears welled in his eyes and rolled down his hollow cheeks; then, with many an ejaculation, he locked up the room and returned to the King. Louis was startled by the expression of grief on the damp features of his old crony.

"What now?" he asked.

"Alas! Sire, misfortunes never come singly. My sister is dead. She's gone below before me," said he, pointing to the floor with a terrible gesture.

"Enough!" cried Louis XI., who disliked any mention of death.

"I make you my heir. I have now nothing for which I care. Here are my keys. Hang me, if such be your good pleasure. Take all; ransack the house; it is full of gold. I give it all up to you——"

"Come, come, old friend," said the King, half moved by the sight of this strange grief, "we shall yet find your treasure some of these fine nights; the sight of such riches will give you a further heart to live. I will come again in the course of the week."

"When it pleaseth you, my liege."

At this answer the King, who had made a few steps toward the door, turned sharply around, and the two men looked at each other with an expression that

pen or pencil would vainly try to reproduce.

"Adieu, my crony!" said Louis XI. at last, in a curt voice, pushing up his cap.

"May God and the Virgin keep you in their good graces!" replied the usurer humbly, as he conducted the King to the door.

After so long a friendship the two men found a barrier raised between them, erected of suspicion and gold; though they had always been as one man on matters of suspicion and gold. But then they knew each other so well, they had so completely the habit, as one might say, of intimacy, that the King could divine from the tone of expression in his voice as he said: "When it pleaseth you, my liege," the repugnance he would henceforth feel when he visited the silversmith, just as the latter recognized a declaration of war in the manner of the King's saying: "Adieu, my crony!"

Thus Louis XI. and his treasurer parted in much doubt as to what their future conduct would be to each other. The monarch, for a truth, knew the secret of the Fleming; but he, on his part, could, by means of his connections, bring about one of the greatest acquisitions that any King of France had ever made; namely, the domains of the house of Burgundy, which were, at that time, the coveted of every European sovereign.

Cornélius's gold and influence could most powerfully aid the negotiations now begun by Desquerdes, the general appointed by Louis XI. to the command of the army then encamped on the Belgian frontiers. The celebrated Marguerite's choice would be guided by the good people of Ghent and the inhabitants about her. Thus these two master-foxes were like two duelists whose arms are paralyzed by some stroke of fate.

Now, whether it was that from that day the King's health began to fail and got steadily worse, or that Cornélius did assist in bringing into France Marguerite of Burgundy—who arrived at Amboise in July 1438, to be married to the Dauphin, to whom she was betrothed in the chapel of the castle—certain it is that the King took no steps toward finding the treasure; further, he levied no tribute on his silversmith, and no trial was held; so the pair remained in a cautious condition of armed neutrality.

Happily for Cornélius, a rumor spread around Tours that his sister was proven to have been the robber; and that she had secretly been put to death by Tristan. Otherwise, and if the true history had become generally known, the whole town would have arisen as one man and hastened to destroy the Malemaison before the King could have taken means to defend it.

But, though these historical guessings may have had some foundation as regards the inaction of Louis XI., it was not so as to Cornélius Hoogworst. He was not supine. The first few days which succeeded the fatal one the silversmith spent in a ceaseless hurry. Like a carnivorous beast confined in a cage, he went and came, he smelt for gold in every cranny of his domicile; he sounded the walls; he studied the crevices; he besought the trees of the garden, the foundations of the house, the turret roofs, earth and heaven, to give back his treasure. Often he stood motionless for hour upon hour, casting his eyes around on every side, plunging

them into space. He essayed this miracles of second-sight and sorcery; he tried to see his riches through space and solids.

One overwhelming thought constantly absorbed him; he was consumed by a single desire that gnawed his vitals; he was more cruelly racked by the everlasting agony of the duel he fought with himself since his passion for gold had turned upon and rent him. It was a species of incomplete suicide, embracing all the pangs of living and dying.

Never was a vice so trapped by itself: a miser who by inadvertence locks himself in his subterranean stronghold that contains his treasure has, like Sardanapalus, the happiness of dying in its midst. But Cornélius, the robber and the robbed in one, knowing neither the secret of the one nor the other, possessed, and yet possessed not, his treasure—a novel, whimsical, but ever-continuing form of torture.

Sometimes, when he forgot himself, he would leave the little gratings of his door open, and then the passers in the street could see the little, weazened old man planted on his two legs in the middle of his untilled garden, absolutely motionless, and looking on anyone who stopped to gaze at him with a fixed, glaring stare, the luridness of which froze them with terror. If by any chance he walked about the streets of Tours, he seemed like a stranger there; he knew not where he was, nor did he know whether the sun or moon shone on him. Oftentimes he would ask his way of those he met, believing himself to be still at Ghent; everywhere he seemed on the hunt for his lost treasure.

The most perennial and the most corporeal of all human ideas—that by which man reproduces himself by creating outside and apart from himself the fictitious being known as Property—that mental demon had its claws of steel perpetually clutching at his miser-soul.

In the midst of this torture, Fear arose, with its acompanying train of sentiments. Two men possessed his secret—the one that he himself knew not. Louis XI. or Coyctier could post their spies to watch his movements when he slept, they might thus discover the unknown gulf into which he had cast his riches, that wealth that he had watered with the life-blood of so many innocent ones and Remorse stood beside Fear.

To prevent during his lifetime the abduction of his lost riches, during the early days after his disaster, he took every conceivable precaution to avoid sleeping; beside, his commercial relations put him in the way of procuring the most powerful anti-narcotics. His wakeful nights were most terrible, his struggles to keep awake awful—alone with night, silence, Remorse, Fear, with all the thoughts that man, instinctively it may be, has most embodied, in obedience to some moral truth, as yet devoid of certain proof.

At last, this man so powerful, his heart so calloused by politics and commerce, this genius (unknown to history), was doomed to succumb to the horrors of the torture he himself had created. Crazed by some reminiscence more agonizing than any he had as yet resisted, he cut his throat with a razor.

His death was almost exactly coincident with that of Louis XI.; thus there

was nothing to restrain the violence of the mob. The populace, unrestrained, pillaged Malemaison, the Evil House. A tradition exists among the older inhabitants of Touraine that a revenue-farmer, named Bohier, had discovered the old usurer's treasure and used it in building the castle of Chenonceaux, that marvelous mansion which, in spite of the lavish wealth of several kings, and the taste of Diane de Poitiers and her rival Catherine de' Medici, remains unfinished to this day.

Happily for Marie de Sassenage, the Comte de Saint-Vallier died, as we all know, during his embassy to Venice. The family did not become extinct. After the departure of the Count the Countess gave birth to a son, whose career was famous in the history of France under the reign of King François I. He was saved by his daughter, the celebrated Diane de Poitiers, the illegitimate great-granddaughter of Louis XI., who became the morganatic wife, the adored mistress of Henry II.; for love and bastardy were hereditary in that noble family.

At the Sign of the Cat and Racket

Dedicated to Mlle. Marie de Montheau

Halfway down the Rue Saint-Denis, almost at the corner of the Rue du Petit-Lion, there stood formerly one of those delightful houses which enable historians to reconstruct old Paris by analogy. The threatening walls of this tumbledown abode seemed to have been decorated with hieroglyphics. For what other name could the passerby give to the X's and V's which the horizontal or diagonal timbers traced on the front, outlined by little parallel cracks in the plaster? It was evident that every beam quivered in its mortices at the passing of the lightest vehicle. This venerable structure was crowned by a triangular roof of which no example will, ere long, be seen in Paris. This covering, warped by the extremes of the Paris climate, projected three feet over the roadway, as much to protect the threshold from the rainfall as to shelter the wall of a loft and its sill-less dormer window. This upper story was built of planks, overlapping each other like slates, in order, no doubt, not to overweight the frail house.

One rainy morning in the month of March, a young man, carefully wrapped in his cloak, stood under the awning of a shop opposite this old house, which he was studying with the enthusiasm of an antiquary. In point of fact, this relic of the civic life of the sixteenth century offered more than one problem to the consideration of an observer. Each story presented some singularity; on the first floor four tall, narrow windows, close together, were filled as to the lower panes with boards, so as to produce the doubtful light by which a clever salesman can ascribe to his goods the color his customers inquire for. The young man seemed very scornful of this essential part of the house; his eyes had not yet rested on it. The windows

of the second floor, where the Venetian blinds were drawn up, revealing little dingy muslin curtains behind the large Bohemian glass panes, did not interest him either. His attention was attracted to the third floor, to the modest sash-frames of wood, so clumsily wrought that they might have found a place in the Museum of Arts and Crafts to illustrate the early efforts of French carpentry. These windows were glazed with small squares of glass so green that, but for his good eyes, the young man could not have seen the blue-checked cotton curtains which screened the mysteries of the room from profane eyes. Now and then the watcher, weary of his fruitless contemplation, or of the silence in which the house was buried, like the whole neighborhood, dropped his eyes towards the lower regions. An involuntary smile parted his lips each time he looked at the shop, where, in fact, there were some laughable details.

A formidable wooden beam, resting on four pillars, which appeared to have bent under the weight of the decrepit house, had been encrusted with as many coats of different paint as there are of rouge on an old duchess's check. In the middle of this broad and fantastically carved joist there was an old painting representing a cat playing rackets. This picture was what moved the young man to mirth. But it must be said that the wittiest of modern painters could not invent so comical a caricature. The animal held in one of its forepaws a racket as big as itself, and stood on its hind legs to aim at hitting an enormous ball, returned by a man in a fine embroidered coat. Drawing, color, and accessories, all were treated in such a way as to suggest that the artist had meant to make game of the shop-owner and of the passing observer. Time, while impairing this artless painting, had made it yet more grotesque by introducing some uncertain features which must have puzzled the conscientious idler. For instance, the cat's tail had been eaten into in such a way that it might now have been taken for the figure of a spectator—so long, and thick, and furry were the tails of our forefathers' cats. To the right of the picture, on an azure field which ill disguised the decay of the wood, might be read the name "Guillaume," and to the left, "Successor to Master Chevrel." Sun and rain had worn away most of the gilding parsimoniously applied to the letters of this superscription, in which the U's and V's had changed places in obedience to the laws of old-world orthography.

To quench the pride of those who believe that the world is growing cleverer day by day, and that modern humbug surpasses everything, it may be observed that these signs, of which the origin seems so whimsical to many Paris merchants, are the dead pictures of once living pictures by which our roguish ancestors contrived to tempt customers into their houses. Thus the Spinning Sow, the Green Monkey, and others, were animals in cages whose skill astonished the passerby, and whose accomplishments prove the patience of the fifteenth-century artisan. Such curiosities did more to enrich their fortunate owners than the signs of "Providence," "Good-faith," "Grace of God," and "Decapitation of John the Baptist," which may still be seen in the Rue Saint-Denis.

However, our stranger was certainly not standing there to admire the cat, which a minute's attention sufficed to stamp on his memory. The young man himself had his peculiarities. His cloak, folded after the manner of an antique drapery, showed a smart pair of shoes, all the more remarkable in the midst of the Paris mud because he wore white silk stockings, on which the splashes betrayed his impatience. He had just come, no doubt, from a wedding or a ball; for at this early hour he had in his hand a pair of white gloves, and his black hair, now out of curl, and flowing over his shoulders, showed that it had been dressed *à la Caracalla,* a fashion introduced as much by David's school of painting as by the mania for Greek and Roman styles which characterized the early years of this century.

In spite of the noise made by a few market gardeners, who, being late, rattled past towards the great market-place at a gallop, the busy street lay in a stillness of which the magic charm is known only to those who have wandered through deserted Paris at the hours when its roar, hushed for a moment, rises and spreads in the distance like the great voice of the sea. This strange young man must have seemed as curious to the shopkeeping folk of the "Cat and Racket" as the "Cat and Racket" was to him. A dazzlingly white cravat made his anxious face look even paler than it really was. The fire that flashed in his black eyes, gloomy and sparkling by turns, was in harmony with the singular outline of his features, with his wide, flexible mouth, hardened into a smile. His forehead, knit with violent annoyance, had a stamp of doom. Is not the forehead the most prophetic feature of a man? When the stranger's brow expressed passion the furrows formed in it were terrible in their strength and energy; but when he recovered his calmness, so easily upset, it beamed with a luminous grace which gave great attractiveness to a countenance in which joy, grief, love, anger, or scorn blazed out so contagiously that the coldest man could not fail to be impressed.

He was so thoroughly vexed by the time when the dormer window of the loft was suddenly flung open, that he did not observe the apparition of three laughing faces, pink and white and chubby, but as vulgar as the face of Commerce as it is seen in sculpture on certain monuments. These three faces, framed by the window, recalled the puffy cherubs floating among the clouds that surround God the Father. The apprentices snuffed up the exhalations of the street with an eagerness that showed how hot and poisonous the atmosphere of their garret must be. After pointing to the singular sentinel, the most jovial, as he seemed, of the apprentices, retired and came back holding an instrument whose hard metal pipe is now superseded by a leather tube; and they all grinned with mischief as they looked down on the loiterer, and sprinkled him with a fine white shower of which the scent proved that three chins had just been shaved. Standing on tiptoe, in the farthest corner of their loft, to enjoy their victim's rage, the lads ceased laughing on seeing the haughty indifference with which the young man shook his cloak, and the intense contempt expressed by his face

as he glanced up at the empty window frame.

At this moment a slender white hand threw up the lower half of one of the clumsy windows on the third floor by the aid of the sash runners, of which the pulley so often suddenly gives way and releases the heavy panes it ought to hold up. The watcher was then rewarded for his long waiting. The face of a young girl appeared, as fresh as one of the white cups that bloom on the bosom of the waters, crowned by a frill of tumbled muslin, which gave her head a look of exquisite innocence. Though wrapped in brown stuff, her neck and shoulders gleamed here and there through little openings left by her movements in sleep. No expression of embarrassment detracted from the candor of her face, or the calm look of eyes immortalized long since in the sublime works of Raphael; here were the same grace, the same repose as in these Virgins, and now proverbial. There was a delightful contrast between the cheeks of that face on which sleep had, as it were, given high relief to a superabundance of life, and the antiquity of the heavy window with its clumsy shape and black sill. Like those day-blooming flowers, which in the early morning have not yet unfurled their cups, twisted by the chills of night, the girl, as yet hardly awake, let her blue eyes wander beyond the neighboring roofs to look at the sky; then, from habit, she cast them down on the gloomy depths of the street, where they immediately met those of her adorer. Vanity, no doubt, distressed her at being seen in undress; she started back, the worn pulley gave way, and the sash fell with the rapid run which in our day has earned for this artless invention of our forefathers an odious name.[1] The vision had disappeared. To the young man the the most radiant star of morning seemed to be hidden by a cloud.

During these little incidents the heavy inside shutters that protected the slight windows of the shop of the "Cat and Racket" had been removed as if by magic. The old door with its knocker was opened back against the wall of the entry by a man-servant, apparently coeval with the sign, who, with a shaking hand, hung upon it a square of cloth, on which were embroidered in yellow slik the words: "Guillaume, Successor to Chevrel." Many a passerby would have found it difficult to guess the class of trade carried on by M. Guillaume. Between the strong iron bars which protected his shop windows on the outside, certain packages, wrapped in brown linen, were hardly visible, though as numerous as herrings swimming in a shoal. Notwithstanding the primitive aspect of the Gothic front, M. Guillaume, of all the merchant clothiers in Paris, was the one whose stores were always the best provided, whose connections were the most extensive, and whose commercial honesty never lay under the slightest suspicion. If some of his brethren in business made a contract with the Government, and had not the required quantity of cloth, he was always ready to deliver it, however large the number of pieces tendered for. The wily dealer knew a thousand ways of extracting the largest profits without being obliged, like them, to court

[1] Fenêtre à la Guillotine.

patrons, cringing to them, or making them costly presents. When his fellow-tradesmen could only pay in good bills of long date, he would mention his notary as an accommodating man, and managed to get a second profit out of the bargain, thanks to this arrangement, which had made it a proverb among the traders of the Rue Saint-Denis: "Heaven preserve you from M. Guillaume's notary!" to signify a heavy discount.

The old merchant was to be seen standing on the threshold of his shop, as if by a miracle, the instant the servant withdrew. M. Guillaume looked at the Rue Saint-Denis, at the neighboring shops, and at the weather, like a man disembarking at Havre, and seeing France once more after a long voyage. Having convinced himself that nothing had changed while he was asleep, he presently perceived the stranger on guard, and he, on his part, gazed at the patriarchal draper as Humboldt may have scruitinzed the first electric eel he saw in America. M. Guillaume wore loose black velvet breeches, pepper-and-salt stockings, and square-toed shoes with silver buckles. His coat, with square-cut fronts, square-cut tails, and square-cut collar, clothed his slightly bent figure in greenish cloth, finished with white metal buttons, tawny from wear. His gray hair was so accurately combed and flattened over his yellow pate that it made it look like a furrowed field. His little green eyes, that might have been pierced with a gimlet, flashed beneath arches faintly tinged with red in the place of eyebrows. Anxieties had wrinkled his forehead with as many horizontal lines as there were creases in his coat. This colorless face expressed patience, commercial shrewdness, and the sort of wily cupidity which is needful in business. At that time these old families were less rare than they are now, in which the characteristic habits and costume of their calling, surviving in the midst of more recent civilization, were preserved as cherished traditions, like the antediluvian remains found by Cuvier in the quarries.

The head of the Guillaume family was a notable upholder of ancient practices; he might be heard to regret the Provost of Merchants, and never did he mention a decision of the Tribunal of Commerce without calling it the *Sentence of the Consuls.* Up and dressed the first of the household, in obedience, no doubt, to these old customs, he stood sternly awaiting the appearance of his three assistants, ready to scold them in case they were late. These young disciples of Mercury knew nothing more terrible than the wordless assiduity with which the master scrutinized their faces and their movements on Monday in search of evidence or traces of their pranks. But at this moment the old clothier paid no heed to his apprentices; he was absorbed in trying to divine the motive of the anxious looks which the young man in silk stockings and a cloak cast alternately at his signboard and into the depths of his shop. The daylight was now brighter, and enabled the stranger to discern the cashier's corner inclosed by a railing and screened by old green silk curtains, where were kept the immense ledgers, the silent oracles of the house. The too inquisitive gazer seemed to covet this little nook, and to be taking the

plan of a dining-room at one side, lighted by a skylight, whence the family at meals could easily see the smallest incident that might occur at the shop-door. So much affection for his dwelling seemed suspicious to a trader who had lived long enough to remember the law of maximum prices; M. Guillaume naturally thought that this sinister personage had an eye to the till of the Cat and Racket. After quitely observing the mute duel which was going on between his master and the stranger, the eldest of the apprentices, having seen that young man was stealthily watching the windows of the third floor, ventured to place himself on the stone flag where M. Guillaume was standing. He took two steps out into the street, raised his head, and fancied that he caught sight of Mlle. Augustine Guillaume in hasty retreat. The draper, annoyed by his assistant's perspicacity, shot a side glance at him; but the draper and his amorous apprentice were suddenly relieved from the fears which the young man's presence had excited in their minds. He hailed a hackney cab on its way to a neighboring stand, and jumped into it with an air of affected indifference. This departure was a balm to the hearts of the other two lads, who had been somewhat uneasy as to meeting the victim of their practical joke.

"Well, gentlemen, what ails you that you are standing there with your arms folded?" said M. Guillaume to his three neophytes. "In former days, bless you, when I was in Master Chevrel's service, I should have overhauled more than two pieces of cloth by this time."

"Then it was daylight earlier," said the second assistant, whose duty this was.

The old shopkeeper could not help smiling. Though two of these young fellows, who were confided to his care by their fathers, rich manufacturers at Louviers and at Sedan, had only to ask and to have a hundred thousand francs the day when they were old enough to settle in life, Guillaume regarded it as his duty to keep them under the rod of an old-world despotism, unknown nowadays in the showy modern shops, where the apprentices expect to be rich men at thirty. He made them work like negroes. These three assistants were equal to a business which would harry ten such clerks as those whose sybaritical tastes now swell the columns of the budget. Not a sound disturbed the peace of this solemn house, where the hinges were always oiled, and where the meanest article of furniture showed the respectable cleanliness which reveals strict order and economy. The most waggish of the three youths often amused himself by writing the date of its first appearance on the Gruyère cheese which was left to their tender mercies at breakfast, and which it was their pleasure to leave untouched. This bit of mischief, and a few others of the same stamp, would sometimes bring a smile on the face of the younger of Guillaume's two daughters, the pretty maiden who has just now appeared to the bewitched man in the street.

Though each of the apprentices, even the eldest, paid a round sum for his board, not one of them would have been bold enough to remain at the master's table when dessert was served. When Mme. Guillaume talked of dress-

ing the salad, the hapless youths trembled as they thought of the thrift with which her prudent hand dispensed the oil. They could never think of spending a night away from the house without having given, long before, a plausible reason for such an irregularity. Every Sunday, each in his turn, two of them accompanied the Guillaume family to Mass at Saint-Leu, and to vespers. Mlles. Virginie and Augustine, simply attired in cotton print, each took the arms of an apprentice and walked in front, under the piercing eye of their mother, who closed the little family procession with her husband, accustomed by her to carry two large prayer-books, bound in black morocco. The second apprentice received no salary. As for the eldest, whose twelve years of perseverance and discretion had initiated him into the secrets of the house, he was paid eight hundred francs a year as the reward of his labors. On certain family festivals he received as a gratuity some little gift, to which Mme. Guillaume's dry and wrinkled hand alone gave value—netted purses, which she took care to stuff with cotton wool, to show off the fancy stitches, braces of the strangest make, or heavy silk stockings. Sometimes, but rarely, this prime minister was admitted to share the pleasures of the family when they went into the country, or when, after waiting for months, they made up their mind to exert the right acquired by taking a box at the theater to command a piece which Paris had already forgotten.

As to the other assistants, the barrier of respect which formerly divided a master draper from his apprentices was so firmly established between them and the old shopkeeper, that they would have been more likely to steal a piece of cloth than to infringe this time-honored etiquette. Such reserve may now appear ridiculous; but these old houses were a school of honestly and sound morals. The masters adopted their apprentices. The young man's linen was cared for, mended, and often replaced by the mistress of the house. If an apprentice fell ill, he was the object of truly maternal attention. In a case of danger the master lavished his money in calling in the most celebrated physicians, for he was not answerable to their parents merely for the good conduct and training of the lads. If one of them, whose character was unimpeachable, suffered misfortune, these old tradesmen knew how to value the intelligence he had displayed, and they did not hesitate to intrust the happiness of their daughters to men whom they had long trusted with their fortunes. Guillaume was one of these men of the old school, and if he had their ridiculous side, he had all their good qualities; and Joseph Lebas, the chief assistant, an orphan without any fortune, was in his mind destined to be the husband of Virginie, his elder daughter. But Joseph did not share the symmetrical ideas of his master, who would not for an empire have given his second daughter in marriage before the elder. The unhappy assistant felt that his heart was wholly given to Mlle. Augustine, the younger. In order to justify this passion, which had grown up in secret, it is necessary to inquire a little further into the springs of the absolute government which ruled the old cloth-merchant's household.

Guillaume had two daughters. The elder, Mlle. Virginie, was the very image of her mother. Mme. Guillaume, daughter of the Sieur Chevrel, sat so upright in the stool behind her desk, that more than once she had heard some wag bet that she was a stuffed figure. Her long, thin face betrayed exaggerated piety. Devoid of attractions or of amiable manners, Mme. Guillaume commonly decorated her head—that of a woman near on sixty—with a cap of a particular and unvarying shape, with long lappets, like that of a widow. In all the neighborhood she was known as the "portress nun." Her speech was curt and her movements had the stiff precision of a semaphore. Her eye, with a gleam in it like a cat's, seemed to spite the world because she was so ugly. Mlle. Virginie, brought up, like her younger sister, under the domestic rule of her mother, had reached the age of eight-and-twenty. Youth mitigated the graceless effect which her likeness to her mother sometimes gave to her features, but maternal austerity had endowed her with two great qualities which made up for everything. She was patient and gentle. Mlle. Augustine, who was but just eighteen, was not like either her father or her mother. She was one of those daughters whose total absence of any physical affinity with their parents makes one believe in the adage: God gives children. Augustine was little, or, to describe her more truly, delicately made. Full of gracious candor, a man of the world could have found no fault in the charming girl beyond a certain meanness of gesture or vulgarity of attitude, and sometimes a want of ease. Her silent and placid face was full of the transient melancholy which comes over all young girls who are too weak to dare to resist their mother's will.

The two sisters, always plainly dressed, could not gratify the innate vanity of womanhood but by a luxury of cleanliness which became them wonderfully, and made them harmonize with the polished counters and the shining shelves, on which the old man-servant never left a speck of dust, and with the old-world simplicity of all they saw about them. As their style of living compelled them to find the elements of happiness in persistent work, Augustine and Virginie had hitherto always satisfied their mother, who secretly prided herself on the perfect characters of her two daughters. It is easy to imagine the results of the training they had received. Brought up to a commercial life, accustomed to hear nothing but dreary arguments and calculations about trade, having studied nothing but grammar, bookkeeping, a little Bible-history, and the history of France in Le Ragois, and never reading any book but those their mother would sanction, their ideas had not acquired much scope. They knew perfectly how to keep house; they were familiar with the prices of things; they understood the difficulty of amassing money; they were economical, and had a great respect for the qualities that make a man of business. Although their father was rich, they were as skilled in darning as in embroidery; their mother often talked of having them taught to cook, so that they might know how to order a dinner and scold a cook with due knowledge. They knew nothing of the pleasures of

the world; and, seeing how their parents spent their exemplary lives, they very rarely suffered their eyes to wander beyond the walls of their hereditary home, which to their mother was the whole universe. The meetings to which family anniversaries gave rise filled in the future of earthly joy to them.

When the great drawing-room on the second floor was to be prepared to receive company—Mme. Roquin, a Demoiselle Chevrel, fifteen months younger than her cousin, and bedecked with diamonds; young Rabourdin, employed in the Finance Office; M. César Birotteau, the rich perfumer, and his wife, known as Mme. César; M. Camusot, the richest silk mercer in the Rue des Bourdonnais, with his father-in-law, M. Cardot, two or three old bankers, and some immaculate ladies—the arrangements, made necessary by the way in which everything was packed away—the plate, the Dresden china, the candlesticks, and the glass—made a variety in the monotonous lives of the three women, who came and went and exerted themselves as nuns would to receive their bishop. Then, in the evening, when all three were tired out with having wiped, rubbed, unpacked, and arranged all the gauds of the festival, as the girls helped their mother to undress, Mme. Guillaume would say to them, "Children, we have done nothing to-day."

When, on very great occasions, "the portress nun" allowed dancing, restricting the games of boston, whist, and backgammon within the limits of her bedroom, such a concession was accounted as the most unhoped felicity, and made them happier than going to the great balls, to two or three of which Guillaume would take the girls at the time of the Carnival.

And once a year the worthy draper gave an entertainment, when he spared no expense. However rich and fashionable the persons invited might be, they were careful not to be absent; for the most important houses on the Exchange had recourse to the immense credit, the fortune, or the time-honored experience of M. Guillaume. Still, the excellent merchant's two daughters did not benefit as much as might be supposed by the lessons the world has to offer to young spirits. At these parties, which were indeed set down in the ledger to the credit of the house, they wore dresses the shabbiness of which made them blush. Their style of dancing was not in any way remarkable, and their mother's surveillance did not allow of their holding any conversation with their partners beyond Yes and No. Also, the law of the old sign of the Cat and Racket commanded that they should be home by eleven o'clock, the hour when balls and fêtes begin to be lively. Thus their pleasures, which seemed to conform very fairly to their father's position, were often made insipid by circumstances which were part of the family habits and principles.

As to their usual life, one remark will sufficiently paint it. Mme. Guillaume required her daughters to be dressed very early in the morning, to come down every day at the same hour, and she ordered their employments with monastic regularity. Augustine, however, had been gifted by chance with a spirit lofty enough to feel the emptiness of such a life. Her blue eyes would sometimes be raised as if to pierce the depths of that

gloomy staircase and those damp storerooms. After sounding the profound cloistral silence, she seemed to be listening to remote, inarticulate revelations of the life of passion, which accounts feelings as of higher value than things. And at such moments her cheek would flush, her idle hands would lay the muslin sewing on the polished oak counter, and presently her mother would say in a voice, of which even the softest tones were sour, "Augustine, my treasure, what are you thinking about?" It is possible that two romances discovered by Augustine in the cupboard of a cook Mme. Guillaume had lately discharged—*Hippolyte Comte de Douglas* and *Le Comte de Comminges*—may have contributed to develop the ideas of the young girl, who had devoured them in secret, during the long nights of the past winter.

And so Augustine's expression of vague longing, her gentle voice, her jasmine skin, and her blue eyes had lighted in poor Lebas's soul a flame as ardent as it was reverent. From an easily understood caprice, Augustine felt no affection for the orphan; perhaps because she did not know that he loved her. On the other hand, the senior apprentice, with his long legs, his chestnut hair, his big hands and powerful frame, had found a secret admirer in Mlle. Virginie, who, in spite of her dower of fifty thousand crowns, had as yet no suitor. Nothing could be more natural than these two passions at cross-purposes, born in the silence of the dingy shop, as violets bloom in the depths of a wood. The mute and constant looks which made the young people's eyes meet by sheer need of change in the midst of persistent work and cloistered peace, were sure, sooner or later, to give rise to feelings of love. The habit of seeing always the same face leads insensibly to our reading there the qualities of the soul, and at last effaces all its defects.

"At the pace at which that man goes, our girls will soon have to go on their knees to a suitor!" said M. Guillaume to himself, as he read the first decree by which Napoleon drew in advance on the conscript classes.

From that day the old merchant, grieved at seeing his eldest daughter fade, remembered how he had married Mlle. Chevrel under much the same circumstances as those of Joseph Lebas and Virginie. A good bit of business, to marry off his daughter, and discharge a sacred debt by repaying to an orphan the benefit he had formerly received from his predecessor under similar conditions! Joseph Lebas, who was now three-and-thirty, was aware of the obstacle which a difference of fifteen years placed between Augustine and himself. Being also too clear-sighted not to understand M. Guillaume's purpose, he knew his inexorable principles well enough to feel sure that the second would never marry before the elder. So the hapless assistant, whose heart was as warm as his legs were long and his chest deep, suffered in silence.

This was the state of affairs in the tiny republic which, in the heart of the Rue Saint-Denis, was not unlike a dependency of La Trappe. But to give a full account of events as well as of feelings, it is needful to go back to some months before the scene with which this story opens. At dusk one evening, a young man passing the darkened shop

of the Cat and Racket had paused for a moment to gaze at a picture which might have arrested every painter in the world. The shop was not yet lighted, and was as a dark cave beyond which the dining-room was visible. A hanging lamp shed the yellow light which lends such charm to pictures of the Dutch school. The white linen, the silver, the cut glass, were brilliant accessories, and made more picturesque by strong contrasts of light and shade. The figures of the head of the family and his wife, the faces of the apprentices, and the pure form of Augustine, near whom a fat chubby-cheeked maid was standing, composed so strange a group; the heads were so singular, and every face had so candid an expression; it was so easy to read the peace, the silence, the modest way of life in this family, that to an artist accustomed to render nature, there was something hopeless in any attempt to depict this scene, come upon by chance. The stranger was a young painter, who, seven years before, had gained the first prize for painting. He had now just come back from Rome. His soul, full-fed with poetry; his eyes, satiated with Raphael and Michael Angelo, thirsted for real nature after long dwelling in the pompous land where art has everywhere left something grandiose. Right or wrong, this was his personal feeling. His heart, which had long been a prey to the fire of Italian passion, craved one of those modest and meditative maidens whom in Rome he had unfortunately seen only in painting. From the enthusiasm produced in his excited fancy by the living picture before him, he naturally passed to a profound admiration for the principal figure; Augustine seemed to be pensive, and did not eat; by the arrangement of the lamp the light fell full on her face, and her bust seemed to move in a circle of fire, which threw up the shape of her head and illuminated it with almost supernatural effect. The artist involuntarily compared her to an exiled angel dreaming of heaven. An almost unknown emotion, a limpid, seething love flooded his heart. After remaining a minute, overwhelmed by the weight of his ideas, he tore himself from his bliss, went home, ate nothing, and could not sleep.

The next day he went to his studio, and did not come out of it till he had placed on canvas the magic of the scene of which the memory had, in a sense, made him a devotee; his happiness was incomplete till he should possess a faithful portrait of his idol. He went many times past the house of the Cat and Racket; he even ventured in once or twice, under a disguise, to get a closer view of the bewitching creature that Mme. Guillaume covered with her wing. For eight whole months, devoted to his love and to his brush, he was lost to the sight of his most intimate friends, forgetting the world, the theater, poetry, music, and all his dearest habits. One morning Girodet broke through all the barriers with which artists are familiar, and which they know how to evade, went into his room, and woke him by asking, "What are you going to send to the Salon?" The artist grasped his friend's hand, dragged him off to the studio, uncovered a small easel picture and a portrait. After a long and eager study of the two masterpieces, Girodet threw himself on his comrade's neck and hugged him, without speaking a word.

His feelings could only be expressed as he felt them—soul to soul.

"You are in love?" said Girodet.

They both knew that the finest portraits by Titian, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci, were the outcome of the enthusiastic sentiments by which, indeed, under various conditions, every masterpiece is engendered. The artist only bent his head in reply.

"How happy are you to be able to be in love, here, after coming back from Italy! But I do not advise you to send such works as these to the Salon," the great painter went on. "You see, these two works will not be appreciated. Such true coloring, such prodigious work, cannot yet be understood; the public is not accustomed to such depths. The pictures we paint, my dear fellow, are mere screens. We should do better to turn rhymes, and translate the antique poets! There is more glory to be looked for there than from our luckless canvases!"

Notwithstanding this charitable advice, the two pictures were exhibited. The *Interior* made a revolution in painting. It gave birth to the pictures of genre which pour into all our exhibitions in such prodigious quantity that they might be supposed to be produced by machinery. As to the portrait, few artists have forgotten that lifelike work; and the public, which as a body is sometimes discerning, awarded it the crown which Girodet himself had hung over it. The two pictures were surrounded by a vast throng. They fought for places, as women say. Speculators and moneyed men would have covered the canvas with double Napoleons, but the artist obstinately refused to sell or to make replicas. An enormous sum was offered him for the right of engraving them, and the print-sellers were not more favored than the amateurs.

Though these incidents occupied the world, they were not of a nature to penetrate the recesses of the monastic solitude in the Rue Saint-Denis. However, when paying a visit to Mme. Guillaume, the notary's wife spoke of the exhibition before Augustine, of whom she was very fond, and explained its purpose. Mme. Roquin's gossip naturally inspired Augustine with a wish to see the pictures, and with courage enough to ask her cousin secretly to take her to the Louvre. Her cousin succeeded in the negotiations she opened with Mme. Guillaume for permission to release the young girl for two hours from her dull labors. Augustine was thus able to make her way through the crowd to see the crowned work. A fit of trembling shook her like an aspen leaf as she recognized herself. She was terrified, and looked about her to find Mme. Roquin, from whom she had been separated by a tide of people. At that moment her frightened eyes fell on the impassioned face of the young painter. She at once recalled the figure of a loiterer whom, being curious, she had frequently observed, believing him to be a new neighbor.

"You see how love has inspired me," said the artist in the timid creature's ear, and she stood in dismay at the words.

She found supernatural courage to enable her to push through the crowd and join her cousin, who was still struggling with the mass of people that hindered her from getting to the picture.

"You will be stifled!" cried Augustine. "Let us go."

But there are moments, at the Salon, when two women are not always free to direct their steps through the galleries. By the irregular course to which they were compelled by the press, Mlle. Guillaume and her cousin were pushed to within a few steps of the second picture. Chance thus brought them, both together, to where they could easily see the canvas made famous by fashion, for once in agreement with talent. Mme. Roquin's exclamation of surprise was lost in the hubbub and buzz of the crowd; Augustine involuntarily shed tears at the sight of this wonderful study. Then, by an almost unaccountable impulse, she laid her finger on her lips, as she perceived quite near her the ecstatic face of the young painter. The stranger replied by a nod, and pointed to Mme. Roquin, as a spoil-sport, to show Augustine that he had understood. This pantomime struck the young girl like hot coals on her flesh; she felt quite guilty as she perceived that there was a compact between herself and the artist. The suffocating heat, the dazzling sight of beautiful dresses, the bewilderment produced in Augustine's brain by the truth of coloring, the multitude of living or painted figures, the profusion of gilt frames, gave her a sense of intoxication which doubled her alarms. She would perhaps have fainted if an unknown rapture had not surged up in her heart to vivify her whole being, in spite of this chaos of sensations. She nevertheless believed herself to be under the power of the Devil, of whose awful snares she had been warned by the thundering words of preachers. This moment was to her like a moment of madness. She found herself accompanied to her cousin's carriage by the young man, radiant with joy and love. Augustine, a prey to an agitation new to her experience, an intoxication which seemed to abandon her to nature, listened to the eloquent voice of her heart, and looked again and again at the young painter, betraying the emotion that came over her. Never had the bright rose of her cheeks shown in stronger contrast with the whiteness of her skin. The artist saw her beauty in all its bloom, her maiden modesty in all its glory. She herself felt a sort of rapture mingled with terror at thinking that her presence had brought happiness to him whose name was on every lip, and whose talent lent immortality to transient scenes She was loved! It was impossible to doubt it. When she no longer saw the artist, these simple words still echoed in her ear, "You see how love has inspired me!" And the throbs of her heart, as they grew deeper, seemed a pain, her heated blood revealed so many unknown forces in her being. She affected a severe headache to avoid replying to her cousin's questions concerning the pictures; but on their return Mme. Roquin could not forbear from speaking to Mme. Guillaume of the fame that had fallen on the house of the Cat and Racket, and Augustine quaked in every limb as she heard her mother say that she should go to the Salon to see her house there. The young girl again declared herself suffering, and obtained leave to go to bed.

"That is what comes of sight-seeing," exclaimed M. Guillaume—"a headache. And is it so very amusing to see in a

picture what you can see any day in your own street? Don't talk to me of your artists! Like writers, they are a starveling crew. Why the devil need they choose my house to flout it in their pictures?"

"It may help to sell a few ells more of cloth," said Joseph Lebas.

This remark did not protect art and thought from being condemned once again before the judgment-seat of trade. As may be supposed, these speeches did not infuse much hope into Augustine, who, during the night, gave herself up to the first meditations of love. The events of the day were like a dream, which it was joy to recall to her mind. She was initiated into the fears, the hopes, the remorse, all the ebb and flow of feeling which could not fail to toss a heart so simple and so timid as hers. What a void she perceived in this gloomy house! What a treasure she found in her soul! To be the wife of a genius, to share his glory! What ravages must such a vision make in the heart of a girl brought up among such a family! What hopes must it raise in a young creature who, in the midst of sordid elements, had pined for a life of elegance! A sunbeam had fallen into the prison. Augustine was suddenly in love. So many of her feelings were soothed that she succumbed without reflection. At eighteen does not love hold a prism between the world and the eyes of a young girl? She was incapable of suspecting the hard facts which result from the union of a loving woman with a man of imagination, and she believed herself called to make him happy, not seeing any disparity between herself and him. To her the future would be as the present. When, next day, her father and mother returned from the Salon, their dejected faces proclaimed some disappointment. In the first place, the painter had removed the two pictures; and then Mme. Guillaume had lost her cashmere shawl. But the news that the pictures had disappeared from the walls since her visit revealed to Augustine a delicacy of sentiment which a woman can always appreciate, even by instinct.

On the morning when, on his way home from a ball, Théodore de Sommervieux—for this was the name which fame had stamped on Augustine's heart —had been squirted on by the apprentices while awaiting the appearance of his artless little friend, who certainly did not know that he was there; the lovers had seen each other for the fourth time only since their meeting at the Salon. The difficulties which the rule of the house placed in the way of the painter's ardent nature gave added violence to his passion for Augustine.

How could he get near to a young girl seated in a counting-house between two such women as Mlle. Virginie and Mme. Guillaume? How could he correspond with her when her mother never left her side? Ingenious, as lovers are, to imagine woes, Théodore saw a rival in one of the assistants, to whose interests he supposed the others to be devoted. If he should evade these sons of Argus, he would yet be wrecked under the stern eyes of the old draper or of Mme. Guillaume. The very vehemence of his passion hindered the young painter from hitting on the ingenious expedients which, in prisoners and in lovers, seem to be the last effort of intelligence

spurred by a wild craving for liberty, or by the fire of love. Théodore wandered about the neighborhood with the restlessness of a madman, as though movement might inspire him with some device. After racking his imagination, it occurred to him to bribe the blowsy waiting-maid with gold. Thus a few notes were exchanged at long intervals during the fortnight following the ill-starred morning when M. Guillaume and Théodore had so scrutinized one another. At the present moment the young couple had agreed to see each other at a certain hour of the day, and on Sunday, at Saint-Leu, during Mass and vespers. Augustine had sent her dear Théodore a list of the relations and friends of the family, to whom the young painter tried to get access, in the hope of interesting, if it were possible, in his love affairs, one of these souls absorbed in money and trade, to whom a genuine passion must appear a quite monstrous speculation, a thing unheard of. Nothing, meanwhile, was altered at the sign of the Cat and Racket. If Augustine was absent-minded, if, against all obedience to the domestic code, she stole up to her room to make signals by means of a jar of flowers, if she sighed, if she were lost in thought, no one observed it, not even her mother. This will cause some surprise to those who have entered into the spirit of the household, where an idea tainted with poetry would be in startling contrast to persons and things, where no one could venture on a gesture or a look which would not be seen and analyzed. Nothing, however, could be more natural: the quiet bark that navigated the stormy waters of the Paris Exchange, under the flag of the Cat and Racket, was just now in the toils of one of these tempests which, returning periodically, might be termed equinoctial. For the last fortnight the five men forming the crew, with Mme. Guillaume and Mlle. Virginie, had been devoting themselves to the hard labor known as stock-taking.

Every bale was turned over, and the length verified to ascertain the exact value of the remnant. The ticket attached to each parcel was carefully examined to see at what time the piece had been bought. The retail price was fixed. M. Guillaume, always on his feet, his pen behind his ear, was like a captain commanding the working of the ship. His sharp tones, spoken through a trap-door, to inquire into the depths of the hold in the cellar-store, gave utterance to the barbarous formulas of trade-jargon, which find expression only in cipher. "How much H.N.Z.?"—"All sold."—What is left of Q.X.?"—"Two ells." — "At what price?" — "Fifty-five three."—"Set down A. at three, with all of J.J., all of M.P., and what is left of V.D.O."—A hundred other injunctions equally intelligible were spouted over the counters like verses of modern poetry, quoted by romantic spirits, to excite each other's enthusiasm for one of their poets. In the evening Guillaume, shut up with his assistant and his wife, balanced his accounts, carried on the balance, wrote to debtors in arrears, and made out bills. All three were busy over this enormous labor, of which the result could be stated on a sheet of foolscap, proving to the head of the house that there was so much to the good in hard cash, so much in goods, so much in bills and notes; that he did

not owe a sou; that a hundred or two hundred thousand francs were owing to him; that the capital had been increased that the farmlands, the houses, or the investments were extended, or repaired, or doubled. Whence it became necessary to begin again with increased ardor, to accumulate more crown-pieces, without its ever entering the brain of these laborious ants to ask—"To what end?"

Favored by this annual turmoil, the happy Augustine escaped the investigations of her Argus-eyed relations. At last, one Saturday evening, the stock-taking was finished. The figures of the sum-total showed a row of 0s long enough to allow Guillaume for once to relax the stern rule as to dessert which reigned throughout the year. The shrewd old draper rubbed his hands, and allowed his assistants to remain at table. The members of the crew had hardly swallowed their thimbleful of some home-made liqueur, when the rumble of a carriage was heard. The family party were going to see *Cendrillon* at the Variétés, while the two younger apprentices each received a crown of six francs, with permission to go wherever they chose, provided they were in by midnight.

Notwithstanding this debauch, the old cloth-merchant was shaving himself at six next morning, put on his maroon-colored coat, of which the glowing lights afforded him perennial enjoyment, fastened a pair of gold buckles on the knee-straps of his ample satin breeches; and then, at about seven o'clock, while all were still sleeping in the house, he made his way to the little office adjoining the shop on the first floor. Daylight came in through a window, fortified by iron bars, and looking out on a small yard surrounded by such black walls that it was very like a well. The old merchant opened the iron-lined shutters, which were so familiar to him, and threw up the lower half of the sash window. The icy air of the courtyard came in to cool the hot atmosphere of the little room, full of the odor peculiar to offices. The merchant remained standing, his hand resting on the greasy arm of a large cane chair lined with morocco, of which the original hue had disappeared; he seemed to hesitate as to seating himself. He looked with affection at the double desk, where his wife's seat, opposite his own, was fitted into a little niche in the wall. He contemplated the numbered boxes, the files, the implements, the cash box—objects all of immemorial origin, and fancied himself in the room with the shade of Master Chevrel. He even pulled out the high stool on which he had once sat in the presence of his departed master. This stool, covered with black leather, the horse-hair showing at every corner—as it had long done, without, however, coming out—he placed with a shaking hand on the very spot where his predecessor had put it, and then, with an emotion difficult to describe, he pulled a bell, which rang at the head of Joseph Lebas's bed. When this decisive blow had been struck, the old man, for whom, no doubt, these reminiscences were too much, took up three or four bills of exchange, and looked at them without seeing them.

Suddenly Joseph Lebas stood before him.

"Sit down there," said Guillaume, pointing to the stool.

As the old master draper had never yet bid his assistant be seated in his presence, Joseph Lebas was startled.

"What do you think of these notes?" asked Guillaume.

"They will never be paid."

"Why?"

"Well, I heard that the day before yesterday Étienne & Co. had made their payments in gold."

"Oh, oh!" said the draper. "Well, one must be very ill to show one's bile. Let us speak of something else.—Joseph, the stock-taking is done."

"Yes, monsieur, and the dividend is one of the best you have ever made."

"Do not use new-fangled words. Say the profits, Joseph. Do you know, my boy, that this result is partly owing to you? And I do not intend to pay you a salary any longer. Mme. Guillaume has suggested to me to take you into partnership. — 'Guillaume and Lebas'; will not that make a good business name? We might add, 'and Co.' to round off the firm's signature."

Tears rose to the eyes of Joseph Lebas, who tried to hide them.

"Oh, M. Guillaume, how have I deserved such kindness? I only do my duty. It was so much already that you should take an interest in a poor orph——"

He was brushing the cuff of his left sleeve with his right hand, and dared not look at the old man, who smiled as he thought that this modest young fellow no doubt needed, as he had needed once on a time, some encouragement to complete his explanations.

"To be sure," said Virginie's father, "you do not altogether deserve this favor, Joseph. You have not so much confidence in me as I have in you. (The young man looked up quickly.) You know all the secrets of the cash-box. For the last two years I have told you of almost all my concerns. I have sent you to travel in our goods. In short, I have nothing on my conscience as regards you. But you—you have a soft place, and you have never breathed a word of it." Joseph Lebas blushed. "Ah, ha!" cried Guillaume, "so you thought you could deceive an old fox like me? When you knew that I had scented the Lecocq bankruptcy?"

"What, monsieur?" replied Joseph Lebas, looking at his master as keenly as his master looked at him, "you knew that I was in love?"

"I know everything, you rascal," said the worthy and cunning old merchant, pulling the assistant's ear. "And I forgive you—I did the same myself."

"And you will give her to me?"

"Yes—with fifty thousand crowns; and I will leave you as much by will, and we will start on our new career under the name of a new firm. We will do good business yet, my boy!" added the old man, getting up and flourishing his arms. "I tell you, son-in-law, there is nothing like trade. Those who ask what pleasure is to be found in it are simpletons. To be on the scent of a good bargin, to hold your own on 'Change, to watch as anxiously as at the gaming table whether Étienne & Co. will fail or no, to see a regiment of Guards march past all dressed in your cloth, to trip your neighbor up—honestly, of course!—to make the goods cheaper than others can; then to carry out an undertaking which you

have planned, which begins, grows, totters, and succeeds! to know the workings of every house of business as well as a minister of police, so as never to make a mistake; to hold up your head in the midst of wrecks, to have friends by correspondence in every manufacturing town; is not that a perpetual game, Joseph? That is life, that is! I shall die in that harness, like old Chevrel, but taking it easy now, all the same."

In the heat of his eager rhetoric, old Guillaume had scarcely looked at his assistant, who was weeping copiously. "Why, Joseph, my poor boy, what is the matter?"

"Oh, I love her so! M. Guillaume, that my heart fails me; I believe——"

"Well, well, boy," said the old man, touched, "you are happier than you know, by Gad! For she loves you. I know it."

And he blinked his little green eyes as he looked at the young man.

"Mlle. Augustine! Mlle. Augustine!" exclaimed Joseph Lebas in his rapture.

He was about to rush out of the room when he felt himself clutched by a hand of iron, and his astonished master spun him round in front of him once more.

"What has Augustine to do with this matter?" he asked, in a voice which instantly froze the luckless Joseph.

"Is it not she that—that—I love?" stammered the assistant.

Much put out by his own want of perspicacity, Guillaume sat down again, and rested his long head in his hands to consider the perplexing situation in which he found himself. Joseph Lebas, shamefaced and in despair, remained standing.

"Joseph," the draper said with frigid dignity, "I was speaking of Virginie. Love cannot be made to order, I know. I know, too, that you can be trusted. We will forget all this. I will not let Augustine marry before Virginie.—Your interest will be ten per cent."

The young man, to whom love gave I know not what power of courage and eloquence, clasped his hand, and spoke in his turn—spoke for a quarter of an hour, with so much warmth and feeling, that he altered the situation. If the question had been a matter of business, the old tradesman would have had fixed principles to guide his decision; but, tossed a thousand miles from commerce, on the ocean of sentiment, without a compass, he floated, as he told himself, undecided in the face of such an unexpected event. Carried away by his fatherly kindness, he began to beat about the bush.

"Deuce take it, Joseph, you must know that there are ten years between my two children. Mlle. Chevral was no beauty, still she has had nothing to complain of in me. Do as I did. Come, come, don't cry. Can you be so silly? What is to be done? It can be managed perhaps. There is always some way out of a scrape. And we men are not always devoted Celadons to our wives—you understand? Mme. Guillaume is very pious. . . . Come. By Gad, boy, give your arm to Augustine this morning as we go to Mass."

These were the phrases spoken at random by the old draper, and their conclusion made the lover happy. He was already thinking of a friend of his as a match for Mlle. Virginie, as he went out of the smoky office, pressing

his future father-in-law's hand, after saying with a knowing look that all would turn out for the best.

"What will Mme. Guillaume say to it?" was the idea that greatly troubled the worthy merchant when he found himself alone.

At breakfast Mme. Guillaume and Virginie, to whom the draper had not as yet confided his disappointment, cast meaning glances at Joseph Lebas, who was extremely embarrassed. The young assistant's bashfulness commended him to his mother-in-law's good graces. The matron became so cheerful that she smiled as she looked at her husband, and allowed herself some little pleasantries of time-honored acceptance in such simple families. She wondered whether Joseph or Virginie were the taller, to ask them to compare their height. This preliminary fooling brought a cloud to the master's brow, and he even made such a point of decorum that he desired Augustine to take the assistant's arm on their way to Saint-Leu. Mme. Guillaume, surprised at this manly delicacy, honored her husband with a nod of approval. So the procession left the house in such order as to suggest no suspicious meaning to the neighbors.

"Does it not seem to you, Mlle. Augustine," said he assistant, and he trembled, "that the wife of a merchant whose credit is as good as M. Guillaume's, for instance, might enjoy herself a little more than madame your mother does? Might wear diamonds—or keep a carriage? For my part, if I were to marry, I should be glad to take all the work, and see my wife happy. I would not put her into the counting-house. In the drapery business, you see, a woman is not so necessary now as formerly. M. Guillaume was quite right to act as he did—and besides, his wife liked it. But so long as a woman knows how to turn her hand to the bookkeeping, the correspondence, the retail business, the orders, and her housekeeping, so as not to sit idle, that is enough. At seven o'clock, when the shop is shut, I shall take my pleasures, go to the play, and into company.—But you are not listening to me."

"Yes, indeed, M. Joseph. What do you think of painting? That is a fine calling."

"Yes. I know a master house-painter, M. Lourdois. He is well-to-do."

Thus conversing, the family reached the Church of Saint-Leu. There Mme. Guillaume reasserted her rights, and, for the first time, placed Augustine next to herself, Virginie taking her place on the fourth chair, next to Lebas. During the sermon all went well between Augustine and Théodore, who, standing behind a pillar, worshiped his Madonna with fervent devotion; but at the elevation of the Host, Mme. Guillaume discovered, rather late, that her daughter Augustine was holding her prayer-book upside down. She was about to speak to her strongly, when, lowering her veil, she interrupted her own devotions to look in the direction where her daughter's eyes found attraction. By the help of her spectacles she saw the young artist, whose fashionable elegance seemed to proclaim him a cavalry officer on leave rather than a tradesman of the neighborhood. It is difficult to conceive of the state of violent agitation in which Mme. Guillaume found herself—she, who flattered herself on having brought

up her daughters to perfection—on discovering in Augustine a clandestine passion of which her prudery and ignorance exaggerated the perils. She believed her daughter to be cankered to the core.

"Hold your book right way up, miss," she muttered in a low voice, tremulous with wrath. She snatched away the tell-tale prayer-book and returned it with the letter-press right way up. "Do not allowed your eyes to look anywhere but at your prayers," she added, "or I shall have something to say to you. Your father and I will talk to you after church."

These words came like a thunderbolt on poor Augustine. She felt faint; but, torn between the distress she felt and the dread of causing a commotion in church, she bravely concealed her anguish. It was, however, easy to discern the stormy state of her soul from the trembling of her prayer-book, and the tears which dropped on every page she turned. From the furious glare shot at him by Mme. Guillaume the artist saw the peril into which his love affair had fallen; he went out, with a raging soul, determined to venture all.

"Go to your room, miss!" said Mme. Guillaume, on their return home; "we will send for you, but take care not to quit it."

The conference between the husband and wife was conducted so secretly that at first nothing was heard of it. Virginie, however, who had tried to give her sister courage by a variety of gentle remonstrances, carried her good nature so far as to listen at the door of her mother's bedroom, where the discussion was held, to catch a word or two. The first time she went down to the lower floor she heard her father exclaim, "Then, madame, do you wish to kill your daughter?"

"My poor dear!" said Virginie, in tears, "papa takes your part."

"And what do they want to do to Théodore?" asked the innocent girl.

Virginie, inquisitive, went down again; but this time she stayed longer; she learned that Joseph Lebas loved Augustine. It was written that on this memorable day, this house, generally so peaceful, should be a hell. M. Guillaume brought Joseph Lebas to despair by telling him of Augustine's love for a stranger. Lebas, who had advised his friend to become a suitor for Mlle. Virginie, saw all his hopes wrecked. Mlle. Virginie, overcome by hearing that Joseph had, in a way, refused her, had a sick headache. The dispute that had arisen from the discussion between M. and Mme. Guillaume, when, for the third time in their lives, they had been of antagonistic opinions, had shown itself in a terrible form. Finally, at half-past four in the afternoon, Augustine, pale, trembling, and with red eyes, was haled before her father and mother. The poor child artlessly related the too brief tale of her love. Reassured by a speech from her father, who promised to listen to her in silence, she gathered courage as she pronounced to her parents the name of Théodore de Sommervieux, with a mischievous little emphasis on the aristocratic *de*. And yielding to the unknown charm of talking of her feelings, she was brave enough to declare with innocent decision that she loved M. de Sommervieux, that she had written to him, and she added, with tears in her eyes: "To

sacrifice me to another man would make me wretched."

"But, Augustine, you cannot surely know what a painter is?" cried her mother with horror.

"Mme. Guillaume!" said the old man, compelling her to silence.—"Augustine," he went on, "artists are generally little better than beggars. They are too extravagant not to be always a bad sort. I served the late M. Joseph Vernet, the late M. Lekain, and the late M. Noverre. Oh, if you could only know the tricks played on poor Father Chevrel by that M. Noverre, by the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, and especially by M. Philidor! They are a set of rascals; I know them well! They all have a gab and nice manners. Ah, your M. Sumer——, Somm——"

"De Sommervieux, papa."

"Well, well, de Sommervieux, well and good. He can never have been half so sweet to you as M. le Chevalier de Saint-Georges was to me the day I got a verdict of the consuls against him. And in those days they were gentlemen of quality."

"But, father, M. Théodore is of good family, and he wrote me that he is rich; his father was called Chevalier de Sommervieux before the Revolution."

At these words M. Guillaume looked at his terrible better-half, who, like an angry woman, sat tapping the floor with her foot while keeping sullen silence; she avoided even casting wrathful looks at Augustine, appearing to leave to M. Guillaume the whole responsibility in so grave a matter, since her opinion was not listened to. Nevertheless, in spite of her apparent self-control, when she saw her husband giving way so mildly under a catastrophe which had no concern with business, she exclaimed—

"Really, monsieur, you are so weak with your daughters! However——"

The sound of a carriage, which stopped at the door, interrupted the rating which the old draper already quaked at. In a minute Mme. Roquin was standing in the middle of the room, and looking at the actors in this domestic scene: "I know all, my dear cousin," said she, with a patronizing air.

Mme. Roquin madè the great mistake of supposing that a Paris notary's wife could play the part of a favorite of fashion.

"I know all," she repeated, "and I have come into Noah's Ark, like the dove, with the olive-branch. I read that allegory in the *Génie du Christianisme,*" she added, turning to Mme. Guillaume; "the allusion ought to please you, cousin. Do you know," she went on, smiling at Augustine, "that M. de Sommervieux is a charming man? He gave me my portrait this morning, painted by a master's hand. It is worth at least six thousand francs." And at these words she patted M. Guillaume on the arm. The old draper could not help making a grimace with his lips which was peculiar to him.

"I know M. de Sommervieux very well," the Dove ran on. "He has come to my evenings this fortnight past, and made them delightful. He has told me all his woes, and commissioned me to plead for him. I know since this morning that he adores Augustine, and he shall have her. Ah, cousin, do not shake your head in refusal. He will be created Baron, I can tell you, and has just been made Chevalier of the Legion of Honor,

by the Emperor himself, at the Salon. Roquin is now his lawyer, and knows all his affairs. Well! M. Sommervieux has twelve thousand francs a year in good landed estate. Do you know that the father-in-law of such a man may get a rise in life—be mayor of his arrondissement, for instance. Have we not seen M. Dupont become a Count of the Empire, and a senator, all because he went as mayor to congratulate the Emperor on his entry into Vienna? Oh, this marriage must take place! For my part, I adore the dear young man. His behavior to Augustine is only met with in romances. Be easy, little one, you shall be happy, and every girl will wish she were in your place. Mme. la Duchesse de Carigliano, who comes to my 'At Homes,' raves about M. de Sommervieux. Some spiteful people say she only comes to me to meet him; as if a duchess of yesterday was doing too much honor to a Chevrel, whose family have been respected citizens these hundred years!

"Augustine," Mme. Roquin went on, after a short pause, "I have seen the portrait. Heavens! How lovely it is! Do you know that the Emperor wanted to have it? He laughed, and said to the deputy high constable that if there were many women like that at his Court while all the kings visited it, he should have no difficulty about preserving the peace of Europe. Is not that a compliment?"

The tempests with which the day had begun were to resemble those of Nature, by ending in clear and serene weather. Mme. Roquin displayed so much address in her harangue, she was able to touch so many strings in the dry hearts of M. and Mme. Guillaume, that at last she hit on one which she could work upon. At this strange period commerce and finance were more than ever possessed by the crazy mania for seeking alliance with rank; and the generals of the Empire took full advantage of this desire. M. Guillaume, as a singular exception, opposed this deplorable craving. His favorite axioms were that, to secure happiness, a woman must marry a man of her own class; that everyone was punished sooner or later for having climbed too high; that love could so little endure under the worries of a household, that both husband and wife needed sound good qualities to be happy; that it would not do for one to be far in advance of the other, because, above everything, they must understand each other; if a man spoke Greek and his wife Latin, they might come to die of hunger. He had himself invented this sort of adage. And he compared such marriages to old-fashioned materials of mixed silk and wool, in which the silk always at last wore through the wool. Still, there is so much vanity at the bottom of man's heart that the prudence of the pilot who steered the Cat and Racket so wisely gave way before Mme. Roquin's aggressive volubility. Austere Mme. Guillaume was the first to see in her daughter's affection a reason for abdicating her principles and for consenting to receive M. de Sommervieux, whom she promised herself she would put under severe inquisition.

The old draper went to look for Joseph Lebas, and inform him of the state of affairs. At half-past six, the dining-room immortalized by the artist saw, united under its skylight, M. and

Mme. Roquin, the young painter and his charming Augustine, Joseph Lebas, who found his happiness in patience, and Mlle. Virginie, convalescent from her headache. M. and Mme. Guillaume saw in perspective both their children married, and the fortunes of the Cat and Racket once more in skillful hands. Their satisfaction was at its height when, at dessert, Théodore made them a present of the wonderful picture which they had failed to see, representing the interior of the old shop, and to which they all owed so much happiness.

"Isn't it pretty!" cried Guillaume. "And to think that anyone would pay thirty thousand francs for that!"

"Because you can see my lappets in it," said Mme. Guillaume.

"And the cloth unrolled!" added Lebas; "you might take it up in your hand."

"Drapery always comes out well," replied the painter. "We should be only too happy, we modern artists, if we could touch the perfection of antique drapery."

"So you like drapery!" cried old Guillaume. "Well, then, by Gad! shake hands on that, my young friend. Since you can respect trade, we shall understand each other. And why should it be despised? The world began with trade, since Adam sold Paradise for an apple. He did not strike a good bargain though!" And the old man roared with honest laughter, encouraged by the champagne, which he sent round with a liberal hand. The band that covered the young artist's eyes was so thick that he thought his future parents amiable. He was not above enlivening them by a few jests in the best taste. So he too pleased everyone. In the evening, when the drawing-room, furnished with what Mme. Guillaume called "everything handsome," was deserted, and while she flitted from the table to the chimney-piece, from the candelabra to the tall candlesticks, hastily blowing out the wax-lights, the worthy draper, who was always clear-sighted when money was in question, called Augustine to him, and seating her on his knee, spoke as follows:—

"My dear child, you shall marry your Sommervieux since you insist; you may, if you like, risk your capital in happiness. But I am not going to be hoodwinked by the thirty thousand francs to be made by spoiling good canvas. Money that is lightly earned is lightly spent. Did I not hear that hare-brained youngster declare this evening that money was made round that it might roll. If it is round for spendthrifts, it is flat for saving folks who pile it up. Now, my child, that fine gentleman talks of giving you carriages and diamonds! He has money, let him spend it on you; so be it. It is no concern of mine. But as to what I can give you, I will not have the crown-pieces I have picked up with so much toil wasted in carriages and frippery. Those who spend too fast never grow rich. A hundred thousand crowns, which is your fortune, will not buy up Paris. It is all very well to look forward to a few hundred thousand francs to be yours some day; I shall keep you waiting for them as long as possible, by Gad! So I took your lover aside, and a man who managed the Lecocq bankruptcy had not much difficulty in persuading the artist to marry under a settlement of his wife's money on

herself. I will keep an eye on the marriage contract to see that what he is to settle on you is safely tied up. So now, my child, I hope to be a grandfather, by Gad! I will begin at once to lay up for my grandchildren; but swear to me, here and now, never to sign any papers relating to money without my advice; and if I go soon to join old Father Chevrel, promise to consult young Lebas, your brother-in-law."

"Yes, father, I swear it."

At these words, spoken in a gentle voice, the old man kissed his daughter on both cheeks. That night the lovers slept as soundly as M. and Mme. Guillaume.

Some few months after this memorable Sunday the high altar of Saint-Leu was the scene of two very different weddings. Augustine and Théodore appeared in all the radiance of happiness, their eyes beaming with love, dressed with elegance, while a fine carriage waited for them. Virginie, who had come in a good hired fly with the rest of the family, humbly followed her younger sister, dressed in the simplest fashion, like a shadow necessary to the harmony of the picture. M. Guillaume had exerted himself to the utmost in the church to get Virginie married before Augustine, but the priests, high and low, persisted in addressing the more elegant of the two brides. He heard some of his neighbors highly approving the good sense of Mlle. Virginie, who was making, as they said, the more substantial match, and remaining faithful to the neighborhood; while they fired a few taunts, prompted by envy of Augustine, who was marrying an artist and a man of rank; adding, with a sort of dismay, that if the Guillaumes were ambitious, there was an end to the business. An old fan-maker having remarked that such a prodigal would soon bring his wife to beggary, Father Guillaume prided himself *in petto* for his prudence in the matter of marriage settlements. In the evening, after a splendid ball, followed by one of those substantial suppers of which the memory is dying out in the present generation, M. and Mme. Guillaume remained in a fine house belonging to them in the Rue du Colombier, where the wedding had been held; M. and Mme. Lebas returned in their fly to the old home in the Rue Saint-Denis, to steer the good ship Cat and Racket. The artist, intoxicated with happiness, carried off his beloved Augustine, and eagerly lifting her out of their carriage when it reached the Rue des Trois-Frères, led her to an apartment embellished by all the arts.

The fever of passion which possessed Théodore made a year fly over the young couple without a single cloud to dim the blue sky under which they lived. Life did not hang heavy on the lovers' hands. Théodore lavished on every day inexhaustible *fioriture* of enjoyment, and he delighted to vary the transports of passion by the soft languor of those hours of repose when souls soar so high that they seem to have forgotten all bodily union. Augustine was too happy for reflection; she floated on an undulating tide of rapture; she thought she could not do enough by abandoning herself to sanctioned and sacred married love; simple and artless, she had no coquetry, no reserves, none of the dominion which a worldly-minded girl

acquires over her husband by ingenious caprice; she loved too well to calculate for the future, and never imagined that so exquisite a life could come to an end. Happy in being her husband's sole delight, she believed that her inextinguishable love would always be her greatest grace in his eyes, as her devotion and obedience would be a perennial charm. And, indeed, the ecstasy of love had made her so brilliantly lovely that her beauty filled her with pride, and gave her confidence that she could always reign over a man so easy to kindle as M. de Sommervieux. Thus her position as a wife brought her no knowledge but the lessons of love.

In the midst of her happiness, she was still the simple child who had lived in obscurity in the Rue Saint-Denis, and she never thought of acquiring the manners, the information, the tone of the world she had to live in. Her words being the words of love, she revealed in them, no doubt, a certain pliancy of mind and a certain refinement of speech; but she used the language common to all women when they find themselves plunged in passion, which seems to be their element. When, by chance, Augustine expressed an idea that did not harmonize with Théodore's, the young artist laughed, as we laugh at the first mistakes of a foreigner, though they end by annoying us if they are not corrected.

In spite of all this love-making, by the end of this year, as delightful as it was swift, Sommervieux felt one morning the need for resuming his work and his old habits. His wife was expecting their first child. He saw some friends again. During the tedious discomforts of the year when a young wife is nursing an infant for the first time, he worked, no doubt, with zeal, but he occasionally sought diversion in the fashionable world. The house which he was best pleased to frequent was that of the Duchesse de Carigliano, who had at last attracted the celebrated artist to her parties. When Augustine was quite well again, and her boy no longer required the assiduous care which debars a mother from social pleasures, Théodore had come to the stage of wishing to know the joys of satisfied vanity to be found in society by a man who shows himself with a handsome woman, the object of envy and admiration.

To figure in drawing-rooms with the reflected luster of her husband's fame, and to find other women envious of her, was to Augustine a new harvest of pleasures; but it was the last gleam of conjugal happiness. She first wounded her husband's vanity when, in spite of vain efforts, she betrayed her ignorance, the inelegance of her language, and the narrowness of her ideas. Sommervieux's nature, subjugated for nearly two years and a half by the first transports of love, now, in the calm of less new possession, recovered its bent and habits, for a while diverted from their channels. Poetry, painting, and the subtle joys of imagination have inalienable rights over a lofty spirit. These cravings of a powerful soul had not been starved in Théodore during these two years; they had only found fresh pasture. As soon as the meadows of love had been ransacked, and the artist had gathered roses and cornflowers as the children do, so greedily that he did not see that his hands could hold no more, the scene changed. When

the painter showed his wife the sketches for his finest compositions he heard her exclaim, as her father had done, "How pretty!" This tepid admiration was not the outcome of conscientious feeling, but of her faith on the strength of love.

Augustine cared more for a look than for the finest picture. The only sublime she knew was that of the heart. At last Théodore could not resist the evidence of the cruel fact—his wife was insensible to poetry, she did not dwell in his sphere, she could not follow him in all his vagaries, his inventions, his joys and his sorrows; she walked groveling in the world of reality, while his head was in the skies. Common minds cannot appreciate the perennial sufferings of a being who, while bound to another by the most intimate affections, is obliged constantly to suppress the dearest flights of his soul, and to thrust down into the void those images which a magic power compels him to create. To him the torture is all the more intolerable because his feeling towards his companion enjoins, as its first law, that they should have no concealments, but mingle the aspirations of their thought as perfectly as the effusions of their soul. The demands of Nature are not to be cheated. She is as inexorable as necessity, which is, indeed, a sort of social nature. Sommervieux took refuge in the peace and silence of his studio, hoping that the habit of living with artists might mold his wife and develop in her the dormant germs of lofty intelligence which some superior minds suppose must exist in every being. But Augustine was too sincerely religious not to take fright at the tone of artists. At the first dinner Théodore gave, she heard a young painter say, with the childlike lightness, which to her was unintelligible, and which redeems a jest from the taint of profanity, "But, madame, your Paradise cannot be more beautiful than Raphael's Transfiguration!—Well, and I got tired of looking at that."

Thus Augustine came among this sparkling set in a spirit of distrust which no one could fail to see. She was a restraint on their freedom. Now, an artist who feels restraint is pitiless; he stays away, or laughs it to scorn. Mme. Guillaume, among other absurdities, had an excessive notion of the dignity she considered the prerogative of a married woman; and Augustine, though she had often made fun of it, could not help a slight imitation of her mother's primness. This extreme propriety, which virtuous wives do not always avoid, suggested a few epigrams in the form of sketches, in which the harmless jest was in such good taste that Sommervieux could not take offense; and even if they had been more severe, these pleasantries were after all only reprisals from his friends. Still, nothing could seem a trifle to a spirit so open as Théodore's to impressions from without. A coldness insensibly crept over him, and inevitably spread. To attain conjugal happiness we must climb a hill whose summit is a narrow ridge, close to a steep and slippery descent; the painter's love was falling down it. He regarded his wife as incapable of appreciating the moral considerations which justified him in his own eyes for his singular behavior to her, and believed himself quite innocent in hiding from her thoughts she could not enter into, and peccadilloes outside the jurisdiction of a bourgeois conscience.

Augustine wrapped herself in sullen and silent grief. These unconfessed feelings placed a shroud between the husband and wife which could not fail to grow thicker day by day. Though her husband never failed in consideration for her, Augustine could not help trembling as she saw that he kept for the outer world those treasures of wit and grace that he formerly would lay at her feet. She soon began to find a sinister meaning in the jocular speeches that are current in the world as to the inconstancy of men. She made no complaints, but her demeanor conveyed reproach.

Three years after her marriage this pretty young woman, who dashed past in her handsome carriage, and lived in a sphere of glory and riches to the envy of heedless folk incapable of taking a just view of the situations of life, was a prey to intense grief. She lost her color; she reflected; she made comparisons; then sorrow unfolded to her the first lessons of experience. She determined to restrict herself bravely within the round of duty, hoping that by this generous conduct she might sooner or later win back her husband's love. But it was not so. When Sommervieux, tired with work, came in from his studio, Augustine did not put away her work so quickly but that the painter might find his wife mending the household linen, and his own, with all the care of a good housewife. She supplied generously and without a murmur the money needed for his lavishness; but in her anxiety to husband her dear Théodore's fortune, she was strictly economical for herself and in certain details of domestic managemnet. Such conduct is incompatible with the easy-going habits of artists, who, at the end of their life, have enjoyed it so keenly that they never inquire into the causes of their ruin.

It is useless to note every tint of shadow by which the brilliant hues of their honeymoon were overcast till they were lost in utter blackness. One evening poor Augustine, who had for some time heard her husband speak with enthusiasm of the Duchesse de Carigliano, received from a friend certain maliguantly charitable warnings as to the nature of the attachment which Sommervieux had formed for this celebrated flirt of the Imperial Court. At one-and-twenty, in all the splendor of youth and beauty, Augustine saw herself deserted for a woman of six-and-thiry. Feeling herself so wretched in the midst of a world of festivity which to her was a blank, the poor little thing could no longer understand the admiration she excited, or the envy of which she was the object. Her face assumed a different expression. Melancholy tinged her features with the sweetness of resignation and the pallor of scorned love. Ere long she too was courted by the most fascinating men; but she remained lonely and virtuous. Some contemptuous words which escaped her husband filled her with incredible despair. A sinister flash showed her the breaches which, as a result of her sordid education, hindered the perfect union of her soul with Théodore's; she loved him well enough to absolve him and condemn herself. She shed tears of blood, and perceived, too late, that there are mésalliances of the spirit as well as of rank and habits. As she recalled the early raptures of their union, she under-

stood the full extent of that lost happiness, and accepted the conclusion that so rich a harvest of love was in itself a whole life, which only sorrow could pay for. At the same time, she loved too truly to lose all hope. At one-and-twenty she dared undertake to educate herself, and make her imagination, at least, worthy of that she admired. "If I am not a poet," thought she, "at any rate, I will understand poetry."

Then, with all the strength of will, all the energy which every woman can display when she loves, Mme. de Sommervieux tried to alter her character, her manners, and her habits; but by dint of devouring books and learning undauntedly, she only succeeded in becoming less ignorant. Lightness of wit and the graces of conversation are a gift of nature, or the fruit of education begun in the cradle. She could appreciate music and enjoy it, but she could not sing with taste. She understood literature and the beauties of poetry, but it was too late to cultivate her refractory memory. She listened with pleasure to social conversation, but she could contribute nothing brilliant. Her religious notions and home-grown prejudices were antagonistic to the complete emancipation of her intelligence. Finally, a foregone conclusion against her had stolen into Théodore's mind, and this she could not conquer. The artist would laugh at those who flattered him about his wife, and his irony had some foundation; he so overawed the pathetic young creature that, in his presence, or alone with him, she trembled. Hampered by her too eager desire to please, her wits and her knowledge vanished in one absorbing feeling. Even her fidelity vexed the unfaithful husband, who seemed to bid her do wrong by stigmatizing her virtue as insensibility. Augustine tried in vain to abdicate her reason, to yield to her husband's caprcies and whims, to devote herself to the selfishness of his vanity. Her sacrifices bore no fruit. Perhaps they had both let the moment slip when souls may meet in comprehension. One day the young wife's too sensitive heart received one of those blows which so strain the bonds of feeling that they seem to be broken. She withdrew into solitude. But before long a fatal idea suggested to her to seek counsel and comfort in the bosom of her family.

So one morning she made her way towards the grotesque façade of the humble, silent home where she had spent her childhood. She sighed as she looked up at the sash-window, whence one day she had sent her first kiss to him who now shed as much sorrow as glory on her life. Nothing was changed in the cavern, where the drapery business had, however, started on a new life. Augustine's sister filled her mother's old place at the desk. The unhappy young woman met her brother-in-law with his pen behind his ear; he hardly listened to her, he was so full of business. The formidable symptoms of stock-taking were visible all round him; he begged her to excuse him. She was received coldly enough by her sister, who owed her a grudge. In fact, Augustine in her finery, and stepping out of a handsome carriage, had never been to see her but when passing by. The wife of the prudent Lebas, imagining that want of money was the prime cause of this early call, tried to keep up a tone of reserve

which more than once made Augustine smile. The painter's wife perceived that, apart from the cap and lappets, her mother had found in Virginie a successor who could uphold the ancient honor of the Cat and Racket. At breakfast she observed certain changes in the management of the house which did honor to Lebas's good sense; the assistants did not rise before dessert; they were allowed to talk, and the abundant meal spoke of ease without luxury. The fashionable woman found some tickets for a box at the Français, where she remembered having seen her sister from time to time. Mme. Lebas had a cashmere shawl over her shoulders, of which the value bore witness to her husband's generosity to her. In short, the couple were keeping pace with the times. During the two-thirds of the day she spent there, Augustine was touched to the heart by the equable happiness, devoid, to be sure, of all emotion, but equally free from storms, enjoyed by this well-matched couple. They had accepted life as a commercial enterprise, in which, above all, they must do credit to the business. Not finding any great love in her husband, Virginie had set to work to create it. Having by degrees learned to esteem and care for his wife, the time that his happiness had taken to germinate was to Joseph Lebas a guarantee of its durability. Hence, when Augustine plaintively set forth her painful position, she had to face the deluge of commonplace morality which the traditions of the Rue Saint-Denis furnished to her sister.

"The mischief is done, wife," said Joseph Lebas; "we must try to give our sister good advice." Then the clever tradesman ponderously analyzed the resources which law and custom might offer Augustine as a means of escape at this crisis; he ticketed every argument, so to speak, and arranged them in their degrees of weight under various categories, as though they were articles of merchandise of different qualities; then he put them in the scale, weighed them, and ended by showing the necessity for his sister-in-law's taking violent steps which could not satisfy the love she still had for her husband; and, indeed, the feeling had revived in all its strength when she heard Joseph Lebas speak of legal proceedings. Augustine thanked them, and returned home even more undecided than she had been before consulting them. She now ventured to go to the house in the Rue du Colombier, intending to confide her troubles to her father and mother; for she was like a sick man who, in his desperate plight, tries every prescription, and even puts faith in old wives' remedies.

The old people received their daughter with an effusiveness that touched her deeply. Her visit brought them some little change, and that to them was worth a fortune. For the last four years they had gone their way in life like navigators without a goal or a compass. Sitting by the chimney corner, they would talk over their disasters under the old law of *maximum*, of their great investments in cloth, of the way they had weathered bankruptcies, and, above all, the famous failure of Lecocq, M. Guillaume's battle of Marengo. Then, when they had exhausted the tale of lawsuits, they recapitulated the sums-total of their most profitable stock-takings, and told each other old stories of

the Saint-Denis quarter. At two o'clock old Guillaume went to cast an eye on the business at the Cat and Racket; on his way back he called at all the shops, formerly the rivals of his own, where the young proprietors hoped to inveigle the old draper into some risky discount, which, as was his wont, he never refused point-blank. Two good Normandy horses were dying of their own fat in the stables of the big house; Mme. Guillaume never used them but to drag her on Sundays to High Mass at the parish church. Three times a week the worthy couple kept open house. By the influence of his son-in-law Sommervieux, M. Guillaume had been named a member of the Consulting Board for the Clothing of the Army. Since her husband had stood so high in office, Mme. Guillaume had decided that she must receive; her rooms were so crammed with gold and silver ornaments, and furniture, tasteless but of undoubted value, that the simplest room in the house looked like a chapel. Economy and expense seemed to be struggling for the upper hand in every accessory. It was as though M. Guillaume had looked to a good investment, even in the purchase of a candlestick. In the midst of this bazaar, where splendor revealed the owners' want of occupation, Sommervieux's famous picture filled the place of honor, and in it M. and Mme. Guillaume found their chief consolation, turning their eyes, harnessed with eye-glasses, twenty times a day on this presentment of their past life, to them so active and amusing. The appearance of this mansion and these rooms, where everything had an aroma of staleness and mediocrity, the spectacle offered by these two beings, cast away, as it were, on a rock far from the world and the ideas which are life, startled Augustine; she could here contemplate the sequel of the scene of which the first part had struck her at the house of Lebas—a life of stir without movement, a mechanical and instinctive existence like that of the beaver; and then she felt an indefinable pride in her troubles, as she reflected that they had their source in eighteen months of such happiness as, in her eyes, was worth a thousand lives like this; its vacuity seemed to her horrible. However, she concealed this not very charitable feeling, and displayed for har parents here newly-acquired accomplishments of mind, and the ingratiating tenderness that love had revealed to her, disposing them to listen to her matrimonial grievances. Old people have a weakness for this kind of confidences. Mme. Guillaume wanted to know the most trivial details of that alien life, which to her seemed almost fabulous. The travels of Baron de la Houtan, which she began again and again and never finished, told her nothing more unheard-of concerning the Canadian savages.

"What, child, your husband shuts himself into a room with naked women! And you are so simple as to believe that he draws them?"

As she uttered this exclamation, the grandmother laid her spectacles on a little work-table, shook her skirts, and clasped her hands on her knees, raised by a foot-warmer, her favorite pedestal.

"But, mother, all artists are obliged to have models."

"He took good care not to tell us

that when he asked leave to marry you. If I had known it, I would never have given my daughter to a man who followed such a trade. Religion forbids such horrors; they are immoral. And at what time of night do you say he comes home?"

"At one o'clock—two——"

The old folks looked at each other in utter amazement.

"Then he gambles?" said M. Guillaume. "In my day only gamblers stayed out so late."

Augustine made a face that scorned the accusation.

"He must keep you up through dreadful nights waiting for him," said Mme. Guillaume. "But you go to bed, don't you? And when he has lost, the wretch wakes you."

"No, mamma, on the contrary, he is sometimes in very good spirits. Not infrequently, indeed, when it is fine, he suggests that I should get up and go into the woods."

"The woods! At that hour? Then have you such a small set of rooms that his bedroom and his sitting-rooms are not enough, and that he must run about? But it is just to give you cold that the wretch proposes such expeditions. He wants to get rid of you. Did one ever hear of a man settled in life, a well-behaved, quiet man galloping about like a warlock?"

"But, my dear mother, you do not understand that he must have excitement to fire his genius. He is fond of scenes which——"

"I would make scenes for him, fine scenes!" cried Mme. Guillaume, interrupting her daughter. "How can you show any consideration to such a man? In the first place, I don't like his drinking water only; it is not wholesome. Why does he object to see a woman eating? What queer notion is that? But he is mad. All you tell us about him is impossible. A man cannot leave his home without a word, and never come back for ten days. And then he tells you he has been to Dieppe to paint the sea? As if anyone painted the sea! He crams you with a pack of tales that are too absurd."

Augustine opened her lips to defend her husband; but Mme. Guillaume enjoined silence with a wave of her hand, which she obeyed by a survival of habit, and her mother went on in harsh tones: "Don't talk to me about the man! He never set foot in a church excepting to see you and to be married. People without religion are capable of anything. Did Guillaume ever dream of hiding anything from me, of spending three days without saying a word to me, and of chattering afterwards like a blind magpie?"

"My dear mother, you judge superior people too severely. If their ideas were the same as other folks', they would not be men of genius."

"Very well, then let men of genius stop at home and not get married. What! A man of genius is to make his wife miserable? And because he is a genius it is all right! Genius, genius! It is not so very clever to say black one minute and white the next, as he does, to interrupt other people, to dance such rigs at home, never to let you know which foot you are to stand on, to compel his wife never to be amused unless my lord is in gay spirits, and to be dull when he is dull."

"But, mother, the very nature of such imaginations——"

"What are such 'imaginations'?" Mme. Guillaume went on, interrupting her daughter again. "Fine ones his are, my word! What possesses a man that all on a sudden, without consulting a doctor, he takes it into his head to eat nothing but vegetables? If indeed it were from religious motives, it might do him some good—but he has no more religion than a Huguenot. Was there ever a man known who, like him, loved horses better than his fellow-creatures, had his hair curled like a heathen, laid statues under muslin coverlets, shut his shutters in broad day to work by lamplight? There, get along; if he were not so grossly immoral, he would be fit to shut up in a lunatic asylum. Consult M. Loraux, the priest at Saint-Sulpice, ask his opinion about it all, and he will tell you that your husband does not behave like a Christian."

"Oh, mother, can you believe——?"

"Yes, I do believe. You loved him, and you can see none of these things. But I can remember in the early days after your marriage. I met him in the Champs-Élysées. He was on horseback. Well, at one minute he was galloping as hard as he could tear, and then pulled up to a walk. I said to myself at that moment, 'There is a man devoid of judgment.'"

"Ah, ha!" cried M. Guillaume, "how wise I was to have your money settled on yourself with such a queer fellow for a husband!"

When Augustine was so imprudent as to set forth her serious grievances against her husband, the two old people were speechless with indignation. But the word "divorce" was ere long spoken by Mme. Guillaume. At the sound of the word divorce the apathetic old draper seemed to wake up. Prompted by his love for his daughter, and also by the excitement which the proceedings would bring into his uneventful life, Father Guillaume took up the matter. He made himself the leader of the application for a divorce, laid down the lines of it, almost argued the case; he offered to be at all the charges, to see the lawyers, the pleaders, the judges, to move heaven and earth. Mme. de Sommervieux was frightened, she refused her father's services, said she would not be separated from her husband even if she were ten times as unhappy, and talked no more about here sorrows. After being overwhelmed by her parents with all the little wordless and consoling kindnesses by which the old couple tried in vain to make up to her for her distress of heart, Augustine went away, feeling the impossibility of making a superior mind intelligible to weak intellects. She had learned that a wife must hide from everyone, even from her parents, woes for which it is so difficult to find sympathy. The storms and sufferings of the upper spheres are appreciated only by the lofty spirits who inhabit there. In every circumstance we can only be judged by our equals.

Thus poor Augustine found herself thrown back on the horror of her meditations, in the cold atmosphere of her home. Study was indifferent to her, since study had not brought her back her husband's heart. Initiated into the secret of these souls of fire, but bereft of their resources, she was compelled to share their sorrows without sharing

their pleasures. She was disgusted with the world, which to her seemed mean and small as compared with the incidents of passion. In short, her life was a failure.

One evening an idea flashed upon her that lighted up her dark grief like a beam from heaven. Such an idea could never have smiled on a heart less pure, less virtuous than hers. She determined to go to the Duchesse de Carigliano, not to ask her to give her back her husband's heart, but to learn the arts by which it had been captured; to engage the interest of this haughty fine lady for the mother of her lover's children; to appeal to her and make her the instrument of her future happiness, since she was the cause of her present wretchedness.

So one day Augustine, timid as she was, but armed with supernatural courage, got into her carriage at two in the afternoon to try for admittance to the boudoir of the famous coquette, who was never visible till that hour. Mme. de Sommervieux had not yet seen any of the ancient and magnificent mansions of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. As she made her way through the stately corridors, the handsome staircases, the vast drawing-rooms—full of flowers, though it was in the depth of winter, and decorated with the taste peculiar to women born to opulence or to the elegant habits of the aristocracy, Augustine felt a terrible clutch at her heart; she coveted the secrets of an elegance of which she had never had an idea; she breathed an air of grandeur which explained the attraction of the house for her husband. When she reached the private rooms of the Duchesse she was filled with jealousy and a sort of despair as she admired the luxurious arrangement of the furniture, the draperies, and the hangings. Here disorder was a grace, here luxury affected a certain contempt of splendor. The fragrance that floated in the warm air flattered the sense of smell without offending it. The accessories of the rooms were in harmony with a view, through plate-glass windows, of the lawns in a garden planted with evergreen trees. It was all bewitching, and the art of it was not perceptible. The whole spirit of the mistress of these rooms pervaded the drawing-room where Augustine awaited her. She tried to divine her rival's character from the aspect of the scattered objects; but there was here something as impenetrable in the disorder as in the symmetry, and to the simple-minded young wife all was a sealed letter. All that she could discern was that, as a woman, the Duchesse was a superior person. Then a painful thought came over her.

"Alas! And is it true," she wondered, "that a simple and loving heart is not all-sufficient to an artist; that to balance the weight of these powerful souls they need a union with feminine souls of a strength equal to their own? If I had been brought up like this siren, our weapons at least might have been equal in the hour of struggle."

"But I am not at home!" The sharp, harsh words, though spoken in an undertone in the adjoining boudoir, were heard by Augustine, and her heart beat violently.

"The lady is in there," replied the maid.

"You are an idiot! Show her in."

replied the Duchesse, whose voice was sweeter, and had assumed the dulcet tones of politeness. She evidently now meant to be heard.

Augustine shyly entered the room. At the end of the dainty boudoir she saw the Duchesses lounging luxuriously on an ottoman covered with brown velvet and placed in the center of a sort of apse outlined by soft folds of white muslin over a yellow lining. Ornaments of gilt bronze, arranged with exquisite taste, enhanced this sort of daïs, under which the Duchesse reclined like a Greek statue. The dark hue of the velvet gave relief to every fascinating charm. A subdued light, friendly to her beauty, fell like a reflection rather than a direct illumination. A few rare flowers raised their perfumed heads from costly Sèvres vases. At the moment when this picture was presented to Augustine's astonished eyes, she was approaching so noiselessly that she caught a glance from those of the enchantress. This look seemed to say to someone whom Augustine did not at first perceive, "Stay; you will see a pretty woman, and make her visit less of a bore."

On seeing Augustine, the Duchesse rose and made her sit down by her.

"And to what do I owe the pleasure of this visit, madame?" she said with a most gracious smile.

"Why all this falseness?" thought Augustine, replying only with a bow.

Her silence was compulsory. The young woman saw before her a superfluous witness of the scene. This personage was, of all the colonels in the army, the youngest, the most fashionable, and the finest man. His face, full of life and youth, but already expressive, was further enhanced by a small mustache twirled up into points, and as black as jet, by a full imperial, by whiskers carefully combed, and a forest of black hair in some disorder. He was whisking a riding whip with an air of ease and freedom which suited his self-satisfied expression and the elegance of his dress; the ribbons attached to his buttonhole were carelessly tied, and he seemed to pride himself much more on his smart appearance than on his courage. Augustine looked at the Duchesse de Carigliano, and indicated the colonel by a sidelong glance. All its mute appeal was understood.

"Good-by, then, M. d'Aiglemont, we shall meet in the Bois de Boulogne."

These words were spoken by the siren as though they were the result of an agreement made before Augustine's arrival, and she winged them with a threatening look that the officer deserved perhaps for the admiration he showed in gazing at the modest flower, which contrasted so well with the haughty Duchesse. The young fop bowed in silence, turned on the heels of his boots, and gracefully quitted the boudoir. At this instant, Augustine, watching her rival, whose eyes seemed to follow the brilliant officer, detected in that glance a sentiment of which the transiet expression is known to every woman. She percieved with the deepest anguish that her visit would be useless; this lady, full of artifice, was too greedy of homage not to have a ruthless heart.

"Madame," said Augustine in a broken voice, "the step I am about to take will seem to you very strange; but there is a madness of despair which ought to excuse anything. I understand only too

well why Théodore prefers your house to any other, and why your mind has so much power over his. Alas! I have only to look into myself to find more than ample reasons. But I am devoted to my husband, madame. Two years of tears have not affaced his image from my heart, thought I have lost him. In my folly I dared to dream of a contest with you; and I have come to you to ask you by what means I may triumph over yourself. Oh, madame," cried the young wife, ardently seizing the hand which her rival allowed her to hold, "I will never pray to God for my own happiness with so much fervor as I will beseech Him for yours, if you will help me win back Sommervieux's regard—I will not say his love. I have no hope but in you. Ah! tell me how you could please him, and make him forget the first days——" At these words Augustine broke down, suffocated with sobs she could not suppress. Ashamed of her weakness, she hid her face in her handkerchief, which she bathed with tears.

"What a child you are, my dear little beauty!" said the Duchesse, carried away by the novelty of such a scene, and touched, in spite of herself, at receiving such homage from the most perfect virtue perhaps in Paris. She took the young wife's handkerchief, and herself wiped the tears from her eyes, soothing her by a few monosyllables murmured with gracious compassion. After a moment's silence the Duchesse, grasping poor Augustine's hands in both her own—hands that had a rare character of dignity and powerful beauty—said in a gentle and friendly voice: "My first warning is to advise you not to weep so bitterly; tears are disfiguring. We must learn to deal firmly with the sorrows that make us ill, for love does not linger long by a sickbed. Melancholy, at first, no doubt, lends a certain attractive grace, but it ends by dragging the features and blighting the loveliest face. And besides, our tyrants are so vain as to insist that their slaves should be always cheerful."

"But, madame, it is not in my power not to feel. How is it possible, without suffering a thousand deaths, to see the face which once beamed with love and gladness turn chill, colorless, and indifferent? I cannot control my heart!"

"So much the worse, sweet child. But I fancy I know all your story. In the first place, if your husband is unfaithful to you, understand clearly that I am not his accomplice. If I was anxious to have him in my drawing-room, it was, I own, out of vanity; he was famous, and he went nowhere. I like you too much already to tell you all the mad things he has done for my sake. I will only reveal one, because it may perhaps help us to bring him back to you, and to punish him for the audacity of his behavior to me. He will end by compromising me. I know the world too well, my dear, to abandon myself to the discretion of a too superior man. You should know that one may allow them to court one, but marry them—that is a mistake! We women ought to admire men of genius, and delight in them as a spectacle, but as to living with them! Never.—No, no. It is like wanting to find pleasure in inspecting the machinery of the Opera instead of sitting in a box to enjoy its brilliant illusions. But this misfortune

has fallen on you, my poor child, has it not? Well, then, you must try to arm yourself against tyranny."

"Ah, madame, before coming in here, only seeing you as I came in, I already detected some arts of which I had no suspicion."

"Well, come and see me sometimes, and it will not be long before you have mastered the knowledge of these trifles, important, too, in their way. Outward things are, to fools, half of life; and in that matter more than one clever man is a fool, in spite of all his talent. But I dare wager you never could refuse your Théodore anything!"

"How refuse anything, madame, if one loves a man?"

"Poor innocent, I could adore you for your simplicity. You should know that the more we love the less we should allow a man, above all, a husband, to see the whole extent of our passion. The one who loves most is tyrannized over, and, which is worse, is sooner or later neglected. The one who wishes to rule should——"

"What, madame, must I then dissimulate, calculate, become false, form an artificial character, and live in it? How is it possible to live in such a way? Can you——" she hesitated; the Duchesse smiled.

"My dear child," the great lady went on in a serious tone, "Conjugal happiness has in all times been a speculation, a business demanding particular attention. If you persist in talking passion while I am talking marriage, we shall soon cease to understand each other. Listen to me," she went on, assuming a confidential tone. "I have been in the way of seeing some of the superior men of our day. Those who have married have for the most part chosen quite insignificant wives. Well, those wives governed them, as the Emperor governs us; and if they were not loved, they were at least respected. I like secrets—especially those which concern women—well enough to have amused myself by seeking the clew to the riddle. Well, my sweet child, those worthy women had the gift of analyzing their husbands' nature; instead of taking fright, like you, at their superiority, they very acutely noted the qualities they lacked, and either by possessing those qualities, or by feigning to possess them, they found means of making such a handsome display of them in their husbands' eyes that in the end they impressed them. Also, I must tell you, all these souls which appear so lofty have just a speck of madness in them, which we ought to know how to take advantage of. By firmly resolving to have the upper hand and never deviating from that aim, by bringing all our actions to bear on it, all our ideas, our cajolery, we subjugate these eminently capricious natures, which, by the very mutability of their thoughts, lend us the means of influencing them."

"Good Heavens!" cried the young wife in dismay. "And this is life. It is a warfare——"

"In which we must always threaten," said the Duchesse, laughing. "Our power is wholly factitious. And we must never allow a man to despise us; it is impossible to recover from such a descent but by odious maneuvering. Come," she added, "I will give you a means of bringing your husband to his senses."

She rose with a smile to guide the

young and guileless apprentice to conjugal arts through the labyrinth of her palace. They came to a back-staircase, which led up to the reception rooms. As Mme. de Carigliano pressed the secret spring-lock of the door she stopped, looking at Augustine with an inimitable gleam of shrewdness and grace. "The Duc de Carigliano adores me," said she. "Well, he dare not enter by this door without my leave. And he is a man in the habit of commanding thousands of soldiers. He knows how to face a battery, but before me—he is afraid!"

Augustine sighed. They entered a sumptuous gallery, where the painter's wife was led by the Duchesse up to the portrait painted by Théodore of Mlle. Guillaume. On seeing it, Augustine uttered a cry.

"I knew it was no longer in my house," she said, "but—here——!"

"My dear child, I asked for it merely to see what pitch of idiocy a man of genius may attain to. Sooner or later I should have returned it to you, for I never expected the pleasure of seeing the original here face to face with the copy. While we finish our conversation I will have it carried down to your carriage. And if, armed with such a talisman, you are not your husband's mistress for a hundred years, you are not a woman, and you deserve your fate."

Augustine kissed the Duchesse's hand, and the lady clasped her to her heart, with all the more tenderness because she would forget her by the morrow. This scene might perhaps have destroyed forever the candor and purity of a less virtuous woman than Augustine, for the astute politics of the higher social spheres were no more consonant to Augustine than the narrow reasoning of Joseph Lebas, or Mme. Guillaume's vapid morality. Strange are the results of the false positions into which we may be brought by the slightest mistake in the conduct of life! Augustine was like an Alpine cowherd surprised by an avalanche; if he hesitates, if he listens to the shouts of his comrades, he is almost certainly lost. In such a crisis the heart steels itself or breaks.

Mme. de Sommervieux returned home a prey to such agitation as it is difficult to describe. Her conversation with the Duchesse de Carigliano had roused in her mind a crowd of contradictory thoughts. Like the sheep in the fable, full of courage in the wolf's absence, she preached to herself, and laid down admirable plans of conduct; she devised a thousand coquettish stratagems; she even talked to her husband, finding, away from him, all the springs of true eloquence which never desert a woman; then, as she pictured to herself Théodore's clear and steadfast gaze, she began to quake. When she asked whether monsieur were at home her voice shook. On learning that he would not be in to dinner, she felt an unaccountable thrill of joy. Like a criminal who has appealed against sentence of death, a respite, however short, seemed to her a lifetime. She placed the portrait in her room, and waited for her husband in all the agonies of hope. That this venture must decide her future life, she felt too keenly not to shiver at every sound, even the low ticking of the clock, which seemed to aggravate her terrors by doling them out to her. She tried to cheat time by

various devices. The idea struck her of dressing in a way which would make her exactly like the portrait. Then, knowing her husband's restless temper, she had her room lighted up with unusual brightness, feeling sure that when he came in curiosity would bring him there at once. Midnight had struck when, at the call of the groom, the street gate was opened, and the artist's carriage rumbled in over the stones of the silent courtyard.

"What is the meaning of this illumination?" asked Théodore in glad tones, as he came into her room.

Augustine skillfully seized the auspicious moment; she threw herself into her husband's arms, and pointed to the portrait. The artist stood rigid as a rock, and his eyes turned alternately on Augustine, on the accusing dress. The frightened wife, half-dead, as she watched her husband's changeful brow—that terrible brow—saw the expressive furrows gathering like clouds; then she felt her blood curdling in her veins when, with a glaring look, and in a deep hollow voice, he began to question her—

"Where did you find that picture?"

"The Duchesse de Carigliano returned it to me."

"You asked her for it?"

"I did not know that she had it."

The gentleness, or rather the exquisite sweetness of this angel's voice, might have touched a cannibal but not an artist in the clutches of wounded vanity.

"It is worthy of her!" exclaimed the painter in a voice of thunder. "I will be revenged!" he cried, striding up and down the room. "She shall die of shame; I will paint her! Yes, I will paint her as Messalina stealing out at night from the palace of Claudius."

"Théodore!" said a faint voice.

"I will kill her."

"My dear——"

"She is in love with that little cavalry colonel, because he rides well——"

"Théodore!"

"Let me be!" said the painter in a tone almost like a roar.

It would be odious to describe the whole scene. In the end the frenzy of passion prompted the artist to acts and words which any woman not so young as Augustine would have ascribed to madness.

At eight o'clock next morning Mme. Guillaume, surprising her daughter, found her pale, with red eyes, her hair in disorder, holding a handkerchief soaked with tears, while she gazed at the floor strewn with the torn fragments of a dress and the broken pieces of a large gilt picture-frame. Augustine, almost senseless with grief, pointed to the wreck with a gesture of deep despair.

"I don't know that the loss is very great!" cried the old mistress of the Cat and Racket. "It was like you, no doubt; but I am told that there is a man on the boulevard who paints lovely portraits for fifty crowns."

"Oh, mother!"

"Poor child, you are quite right," replied Mme. Guillaume, who misinterpreted the expression of her daughter's glance at her. "True, my child, no one ever can love you as fondly as a mother. My darling, I guess it all; but confide your sorrows to me, and I will comfort you. Did I not tell you long ago that the man was mad! Your maid has told

me pretty stories. Why, he must be a perfect monster!"

Augustine laid a finger on her white lips, as if to implore a moment's silence. During this dreadful night misery had led her to that patient resignation which in mothers and loving wives transcends in its effects all human energy, and perhaps reveals in the heart of women the existence of certain chords which God has withheld from men.

An inscription engraved on a broken column in the cemetery at Montmartre states that Mme. de Sommervieux died at the age of twenty-seven. In the simple words of this epitaph one of the timid creature's friends can read the last scene of a tragedy. Every year, on the second of November, the solemn day of the dead, he never passes this youthful monument without wondering whether it does not need a stronger woman than Augustine to endure the violent embrace of genius?

"The humble and modest flowers that bloom in the valley," he reflects, "perish perhaps when they are transplanted too near the skies, to the region where storms gather and the sun is scorching."

The Ruggieri's Secrets

Between eleven o'clock and midnight, towards the end of October, 1573, two Florentines, brothers, Albert de Gondi, Marshal of France, and Charles de Gondi la Tour, Master of the Wardrobe to King Charles IX., were sitting at the top of a house in the Rue Saint-Honoré on the edge of the gutter. Such gutters were made of stone; they ran along below the roof to catch the rain-water, and were pierced here and there with long gargoyles carved in the form of grotesque creatures with gaping jaws. In spite of the zeal of the present generation in the destruction of ancient houses, there were still in Paris many such gutter-spouts when, not long since, the police regulation as to waste-pipes led to their disappearance. A few sculptured gutters are still to be seen in the Saint-Antoine quarter, where the low rents have kept owners from adding rooms in the roof.

It may seem strange that two persons invested with such important functions should have chosen a perch more befitting cats. But to anyone who has hunted through the historical curiosities of that time, and seen how many interests were complicated about the throne, so that the domestic politics of France can only be compared to a tangled skein of thread, these two Florentines are really cats, and quite in their place in a gutter. The devotion to the person of Catherine de' Medici, who had transplanted them to the French Court, required them to shirk none of the consequences of their intrusion there.

But to explain how and why these two courtiers were perched up there, it will be necessary to relate a scene which had just taken place within a stone's throw of this gutter, at the Louvre, in the fine brown room—which is, perhaps, all that remains of Henri II.'s apart-

ments—where the Court was in attendance after supper on the two Queens and the King. At that time middle-class folk supped at six o'clock, and men of rank at seven; but people of exquisite fashion supped between eight and nine; it was the meal we nowadays call dinner.

Some people have supposed that etiquette was the invention of Louis XIV.; but this is a mistake; it was introduced into France by Catherine de' Medici, who was so exacting that the Connétable Anne de Montmorency had more difficulty in obtaining leave to ride into the coutryard of the Louvre than in winning his sword, and even then the permission was granted only on the score of his great age. Etiquette was slightly relaxed under the first three Bourbon kings, but assumed an Oriental character under Louis the Great, for it was derived from the Lower Empire, which borrowed it from Persia. In 1573 not only had very few persons a right to enter the courtyard of the Louvre with their attendants and torches, just as in Louis XIV.'s time only dukes and peers might drive under the porch, but the functions which gave the privilege of attending their Majesties after supper could easily be counted. The Maréchal de Retz, whom we have just seen keeping watch on the gutter, once offered a thousand crowns of that day to the clerk of the closet to get speech of Henri III. at an hour when he had no right to *entrée*. And how a certain venerable historian mocks at a view of the courtyard of the château of Blois, into which the draughtsman introduced the figure of a man on horseback!

At this hour, then, there were at the Louvre none but the most eminent persons in the kingdom. Queen Elizabeth of Austria and her mother-in-law, Catherine de' Medici, were seated to the left of the fireplace. In the opposite corner the king, sunk in his arm-chair, affected an apathy excusable on the score of digestion, for he had eaten like a prince returned from hunting. Possibly, too, he wished to avoid speech in the presence of so many persons whose interest it was to detect his thoughts.

The courtiers stood, hat in hand, at the further end of the room. Some conversed in understones; others kept an eye on the King, hoping for a glance or a word. One, being addressed by the Queen-mother, conversed with her for a few minutes. Another would be so bold as to speak a word to Charles IX., who replied with a nod or a short answer. A German noble, the Count of Solern, was standing in the chimney corner by the side of Charles V.'s granddaughter, with whom he had come to France. Near the young Queen, seated on a stool, was her lady-in-waiting, the Countess Fieschi, a Strozzi, and related to Catherine. The beautiful Mme. de Sauves, a descendant of Jacques Cœur, and mistress in succession of the King of Navarre, of the King of Poland, and of the Duc d'Alençon, had been invited to supper, but she remained standing, her husband being merely a Secretary of State. Behind these two ladies were the two Gondi, talking to them. They alone were laughing of all the dull assembly. Gondi, made Duc de Retz and Gentleman of the Bedchamber, since obtaining the Marshal's baton though he had never commanded an army, had been sent as the King's proxy to be

married to the Queen at Spires. This honor plainly indicated that he, like his brother, was one of the few persons whom the King and Queen admitted to a certain familiarity.

On the King's side the most conspicuous figure was the Maréchal de Tavannes, who was at Court on business; Neufville de Villeroy, one of the shrewdest negotiators of the time, who laid the foundation of the fortunes of his family; MM. de Birague and de Chiverni, one in attendance on the Queen-mother, the other Chancellor of Anjou and of Poland, who, knowing Catherine's favoritism, had attached himself to Henri III., the brother whom Charles IX. regarded as an enemy; Strozzi, a cousin of Queen Catherine's, and a few more gentlemen, among whom were to be noted the old Cardinal de Lorraine, and his nephew, the young Duc de Guise, both very much kept at a distance by Catherine and by the King. These two chiefs of the Holy Alliance, afterwards known as the League, established some years since with Spain, made a display of the submission of servants who await their opportunity to become the masters; Catherine and Charles IX. were watching each other with mutual attention.

At this Court—as gloomy as the room in which it had assembled—each one had reason for sadness or absence of mind. The young Queen was enduring all the torments of jealousy, and disguised them ineffectually by attempting to smile at her husband, whom she adored as a pious woman of infinite kindness. Marie Touchet, Charles IX.'s only mistress, to whom he was chivalrously faithful, had come home a month since from the château of Fayet, in Dauphiné, whither she had retired for the birth of her child; and she had brought back with her the only son Charles IX. ever had—Charles, at first Comte d'Auvergne, and afterwards Duc d'Angoulême.

Besides the grief of seeing her rival the mother of the King's son, while she had only a daughter, the poor Queen was enduring the mortification of complete desertion. During his mistress's absence, the King had made it up with his wife with a vehemence which history mentions as one of the causes of his death. Thus Marie Touchet's return made the pious Austrian princess understand how little her husband's heart had been concerned in his love-making. Nor was this the only disappointment the young Queen had to endure in this matter; till now Catherine de' Medici had seemed to be her friend; but, in fact, her mother-in-law, for political ends, had encouraged her son's infidelity, and preferred to support the mistress rather than the wife. And this is the reason why.

When Charles IX. first confessed his passion for Marie Touchet, Catherine looked with favor on the girl for reasons affecting her own prospects of dominion. Marie Touchet was brought to Court at a very early age, at the time of life when a girl's best feelings are in their bloom; she loved the King passionately for his own sake. Terrified at the gulf into which ambition had overthrown the Duchesse de Valentinois, better known as Diane de Poitiers, she was afraid too, no doubt, of Queen Catherine, and preferred happiness to splendor. She thought perhaps that a pair of lovers so young as she and the King were

could not hold their own against the Queen-mother.

And, indeed, Marie, the only child of Jean Touchet, the lord of Beauvais and Le Quillard, King's Councilor, and Lieutenant of the Bailiwick of Orleans, halfway between the citizen class and the lowest nobility, was neither altogether a noble nor altogether bourgeois, and was probably ignorant of the objects of innate ambition aimed at by the Pisseleus and the Saint-Valliers, women of family who were struggling for their families with the secret weapons of love. Marie Touchet, alone, and of no rank, spared Catherine de' Medici the annoyance of finding in her son's mistress the daughter of some great house who might have set up for her rival.

Jean Touchet, a wit in his day, to whom some poets dedicated their works, wanted nothing of the Court. Marie, a young creature, with no following, as clever and well-informed as she was simple and artless, suited the Queen-mother to admiration, and won her warm affection.

In point of fact, Catherine persuaded the Parlement to acknowledge the son which Marie Touchet bore to the King in the month of April, and she granted him the title of Comte d'Auvergne, promising the King that she would leave the boy her personal estate, the *Comtés* of Auvergne and Lauraguais. Afterwards, Marguerite, Queen of Navarre, disputed the gift when she became Queen of France, and annulled it; but later still, Louis XIII., out of respect to the royal blood of the Valois, indemnified the Comte d'Auvergne by making him Duc d'Angoulême.

Catherine had already given Marie Touchet, who asked for nothing, the manor of Belleville, an estate without a title, near Vincennes, whither she came when, after hunting, the King, slept at that royal residence. Charles IX. spent the greater part of his later days in that gloomy fortress, and, according to some authors, ended his days there as Louis XII. had ended his. Though it was very natural that a lover so entirely captivated should lavish on the woman he adored fresh proofs of affection when he had to expiate his legitimate infidelities, Catherine, after driving her son back to his wife's arms, certainly pleaded for Marie Touchet as women can, and had won the King back to his mistress again. Whatever could keep Charles IX. employed in anything but politics was pleasing to Catherine; and the kind intentions she expressed towards this child for the moment deceived Charles IX., who was beginning to regard her as his enemy.

The motives on which Catherine acted in this business escaped the discernment of the Queen, who, according to Brantôme, was one of the gentlest Queens that ever reigned, and who did no harm nor displeasure to anyone, even reading her Hours in secret. But this innocent Princess began to perceive what gulfs yawn round a throne, a terrible discovery which might well make her feel giddy; and some still worse feeling must have inspired her reply to one of her ladies, who, at the King's death, observed to her that if she had had a son, she would be Queen-mother and Regent—

"Ah, God be praised that He never gave me a son! What would have come of it? The poor child would have been

robbed, as they tried to rob the King my husband, and I should have been the cause of it. God has had mercy on the kingdom, and has ordered everything for the best."

This Princess, of whom Brantôme thinks he has given an ample description when he had said that she had a complexion of face as fine and delicate as that of the ladies of her Court, and very pleasing, and that she had a beautiful shape though but of middle height, was held of small account at the Court; and the King's state affording her an excuse for her double grief, her demeanor added to the gloomy hues of a picture to which a young Queen less cruelly stricken than she was might have given some brightness. The pious Elizabeth was at this crisis a proof of the fact that qualities which add luster to a woman in ordinary life may be fatal in a queen. A princess who did not devote her whole night to prayer would have been a valuable ally for Charles IX., who found no help either in his wife or in his mistress.

As to the Queen-mother, she was absorbed in watching the King; he during supper had made a display of high spirits, which she interpreted as assumed to cloak some plan against herself. Such sudden cheerfulness was in too strong a contrast to the fractious humor he had betrayed by his persistency in hunting, and by a frenzy of toil at his forge, where he wrought iron, for Catherine to be duped by it. Though she could not guess what statesman was lending himself to these schemes and plots—for Charles IX. could put his mother's spies off the scent—Catherine had no doubt that some plan against her was in the wind.

The unexpected appearance of Tavannes, arriving at the same time as Strozzi, whom she had summoned, had greatly aroused her suspicions. By her power of organization Catherine was superior to the evolution of circumstances; but against sudden violence she was powerless.

As many persons know nothing of the state of affairs, complicated by the multiplicity of parties which then racked France, each leader having his own interests in view, it is needful to devote a few words to describing the dangerous crisis in which the Queen-mother had become entangled. And as this will show Catherine de' Medici in a new light, it will carry us to the very core of this narrative.

Two words will fully summarize this strange woman, so interesting to study, whose influence left such deep traces on France. These two words are dominion and astrology. Catherine de' Medici was excessively ambitious; she had no passion but for power. Superstitious and fatalist, as many a man of superior mind has been, her only sincere belief was in the occult sciences. Without this twofold light, she must always remain misunderstood; and by giving the first place to her faith in astrology, a light will be thrown on the two philosophical figures of this study.

There was a man whom Catherine clung to more than to her children; this man was Cosmo Ruggieri. She gave him rooms in her Hôtel de Soissons; she had made him her chief counselor, instructing him to tell her if the

stars ratified the advice and common sense of her ordinary advisers.

Certain curious antecedent facts justified the power which Ruggieri exerted over his mistress till her latest breath. One of the most learned men of the sixteenth century was beyond doubt the physician to Catherine's father, Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino. This leech was known as Ruggiero the elder (*vecchio Ruggier,* and in French *Roger l'Ancien,* with authors who have written concerning alchemy), to distinguish him from his two sons, Lorenzo Ruggiero, called the Great by writers on the Cabala, and Cosmo Ruggiero, Catherine's astrologer, also known as *Roger* by various French historians. French custom altered their name to Ruggieri, as it did Catherine's from Medici to Medicis.

The elder Ruggieri, then, was so highly esteemed by the family of the Medici that the two dukes, Cosmo and Lorenzo, were godfathers to his sons. In his capacity of mathematician, astrologer, and physician to the Ducal House—three offices that were often scarcely distinguished—he cast the horoscope of Catherine's nativity, in concert with Bazile, the famous mathematician. At that period the occult sciences were cultivated with a meagerness which may seem surprising to the skeptical spirits of this supremely analytical age, who perhaps may find in this historical sketch the germ of the positive sciences which flourish in the nineteenth century—bereft, however, of the poetic grandeur brought to them by the daring speculators of the sixteenth; for they, instead of applying themselves to industry, exalted art and vivified thought. The protection universally granted to these sciences by the sovereigns of the period was indeed justified by the admirable works of inventors who, starting from the search for the *magnum opus,* arrived at astonishing results.

Never, in fact, were rules more curious for these mysteries. The Fugger family, in whom every modern Lucullus must recognize his chiefs, and every banker his masters, were beyond a doubt men of business, not to be caught nodding; well, these practical men, while lending the capitalized wealth of Europe to the sovereigns of the sixteenth century—who ran into debt quite as handsomely as those of to-day—these illustrious entertainers of Charles V. furnished funds for the retorts of Paracelsus. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Ruggieri the elder was the head of that secret college whence came Cardan, Nostradamus, and Agrippa, each in turn physician to the Valois; and all the astronomers, astrologers, and alchemists who at that period crowded to the Courts of the Princes of Christendom, and who found especial welcome and protection in France from Catherine de' Medici.

In the horoscope cast for Catherine by Bazile and Ruggieri the elder, the principal events of her life were predicted with an accuracy that is enough to drive disbelievers to despair. This forecast announced the disasters which, during the siege of Florence, affected her early life, her marriage with a prince of France, his unexpected accession to the throne, the birth and the number of her children. Three of her sons were to reign in succession, her two daughters were to become queens; all were to

die childless. And this was all so exactly verified, that many historians have regarded it as a prophecy after the event.

It is well known that Nostradamus brought to the château of Chaumont, whither Catherine went at the time of la Renaudie's conspiracy, a woman who had the gift of reading the future. Now in the time of Francis II., when the Queen's sons were still children and in good health, before Elizabeth de Valois had married Philip II. of Spain, or Marguerite de Valois had married Henri de Bourbon, King of Navarre, Nostradamus and this soothsayer confirmed all the details of the famous horoscope.

This woman, gifted no doubt with second sight, and one of the extensive association of indefatigable inquirers for the *magnum opus,* though her life has evaded the ken of history, foretold that the last of these children to wear the crown would perish assassinated. Having placed the Queen in front of a magical mirror in which a spinning-wheel was reflected, each child's face appearing at the end of a spoke, the soothsayer made the wheel turn, and the Queen counted the number of turns. Each turn was a year of a reign. When Henri IV. was placed on the wheel, it went round twenty-two times. The woman—some say it was a man—told the terrified Queen that Henri de Bourbon would certainly be king of France, and reign so many years. Queen Catherine vowed a mortal hatred of the Béarnais on hearing that he would succeed the last, murdered Valois.

Curious to know what sort of death she herself would die, she was warned to beware of Saint-Germain. Thenceforth, thinking that she would be imprisoned or violently killed at the château of Saint-Germain, she never set foot in it, though, by its nearness to Paris, it was infinitely better situated for her plans than those where she took refuge with the King in troubled times. When she fell ill, a few days after the Duc de Guise was assassinated, during the assembly of the States-General at Blois, she asked the name of the prelate who came to minister to her. She was told that his name was Saint-Germain.

"I am a dead woman!" she cried.

She died the next day, having lived just the number of years allotted to her by every reading of her horoscope.

This scene, known to the Cardinal de Lorraine, who ascribed it to the Black Art, was being realized; Francis II. had reigned for two turns only of the wheel, and Charles IX. was achieving his last. When Catherine spoke these strange words to her son Henri as he set out for Poland, "You will soon return!" they must be ascribed to her faith in the occult sciences, and not to any intention of poisoning Charles IX. Marguerite de France was now Queen of Navarre; Elizabeth was Queen of Spain; the Duc d'Anjou was King of Poland.

Many other circumstances contributed to confirm Catherine's belief in the occult sciences. On the eve of the tournament where Henri II. was mortally wounded, Catherine saw the fatal thrust in a dream. Her astrological council, consisting of Nostradamus and the two Ruggieri, had foretold the King's death. History has recorded Catherine's earnest entreaties that he should not enter the lists. The prognostic, and the dream begotten of the prognostic, were verified.

The chronicles of the time relate another and not less strange fact. The courier who brought news of the victory of Montcontour arrived at night, having ridden so hard that he had killed three horses. The Queen-mother was roused and said, "I knew it."

"In fact," says Brontôme, "she had the day before announced her son's success and some details of the fight."

The astrologer attached to the House of Bourbon foretold that the youngest of the princes in direct descent from Saint-Louis, the son of Antoine de Bourbon, would be king of France. This prophecy, noted by Sully, was fulfilled precisely as described by the horoscope, which made Henri IV. remark that by dint of lies these astrologers hit on the truth.

Be this as it may, most of the clever men of the time believed in the far-reaching "science of the Magi," as it was called by the masters of astrology—or sorcery, as it was termed by the people—and they were justified by the verification of horoscopes.

It was for Cosmo Ruggieri, her mathematician and astrologer—her wizard, if you will—that Catherine erected the pillar against the corn market in Paris, the only remaining relic of the Hôtel de Soissons. Cosmo Ruggieri, like confessors, had a mysterious influence which satisfied him, as it does them. His secret ambition, too, was superior to that of vulgar minds. This man, depicted by romance writers and playwrights as a mere juggler, held the rich abbey of Saint-Mahé in Louer Brittany, and had refused high ecclesiastical preferment; the money he derived in abundance from the Superstitious mania of the time was sufficient for his private undertakings; and the Queen's hand, extended to protect his head, preserved every hair of it from harm.

As to Catherine's devouring thirst for dominion, her desire to acquire power was so great that, in order to grasp it, she could ally herself with the Guises, the enemies of the throne; and to keep the reins of State in her own hands, she adopted every means, sacrificing her friends, and even her children. This woman could not live without the intrigues of rule, as a gambler cannot live without the excitement of play. Though she was an Italian and a daughter of the luxurious Medici, the Calvinists, though they calumniated her plentifully, never accused her of having a lover.

Appreciating the maxim "Divide to reign," for twelve years she had been constantly playing off one force against another. As soon as she took the reins of government into her hands, she was compelled to encourage discord to neutralize the strength of two rival houses and save the throne. This necessary system justified Henri II.'s foresight. Catherine was the inventor of the political see-saw, imitated since by every prince who has found himself in a similar position; she upheld, by turns, the Calvinists against the Guises, and the Guises against the Calvinists. Then, after using the two creeds to check each other in the heart of the people, she set the Duc d'Anjou against Charles IX. After using things to counteract each other, she did the same with men, always keeping the clew to their interests in her own hands.

But in this tremendous game, which requires the head of a Louis XI. or a

Louis XVIII., the player inevitably is the object of hatred to all parties, and is condemned to win unfailingly, for one lost battle makes every interest his enemy, until indeed by dint of winning he ends by finding no one to play against him. The greater part of Charles IX.'s reign was the triumph of the domestic policy carried out by this wonderful woman. What extraordinary skill Catherine must have brought into play to get the chief command of the army given to the Duc d'Anjou, under a brave young King thirsting for glory, capable and generous—and in the face of the Connétable Anne de Montmorency! The Duc d'Anjou, in the eyes of all Europe, reaped the honors of Saint-Bartholomew's Day, while Charles IX. had all the odium. After instilling into the King's mind a spurious and covert jealousy of his brother, she worked upon this feeling so as to exhaust Charles IX.'s really fine qualities in the intrigues of rivalry with his brother. Cypierre, their first tutor, and Amyot, Charles IX.'s preceptor, had made their royal charge so noble a man, and had laid the foundations of so great a reign, that the mother hated the son from the very first day when she feared to lose her power after having conquered it with so much difficulty.

These facts have led certain historians to believe that the Queen-mother had a preference for Henri III.; but her behavior at this juncture proves that her heart was absolutely indifferent towards her children. The Duc d'Anjou, when he went to govern Poland, robbed her of the tool she needed to keep Charles IX.'s mind fully occupied by these domestic intrigues, which had hitherto neutralized his energy by giving food to his vehement feelings. Catherine then hatched the conspiracy of la Mole and Coconnas, in which the Duc d'Alençon had a hand; and he, when he became Duc d'Anjou on his brother's being made King, lent himself very readily to his mother's views, and displayed an ambition which was encouraged by his sister Marguerite, Queen of Navarre.

This plot, now ripened to the point which Catherine desired, aimed at putting the young Duke and his brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, at the head of the Calvinists, at seizing Charles IX., thus making the King, who had no heir, a prisoner, and leaving the throne free for the Duke, who proposed to establish Calvinism in France. Only a few days before his death, Calvin had won the reward he hoped for—the Reformed creed was called Calvinism in his honor.

La Mole and Coconnas had been arrested fifty days before the night on which this scene opens, to be beheaded in the following April; and if le Laboureur and other judicious writers had not amply proved that they were the victims of the Queen-mother, Cosmo Ruggieri's participation in the affair would be enough to show that she secretly directed it. This man, suspected and hated by the King for reasons which will be presently sufficiently explained, was implicated by the inquiries. He admitted that he had furnished la Mole with an image representing the King and stabbed to the heart with two needles. This form of witchcraft was at that time a capital crime. This kind of bedevilment (called in French *envoûter,* from the Latin *vultus,* it is said) represented one of the most infernal

conceptions that hatred could imagine, and the word admirably expresses the magnetic and terrible process carried on, in occult science, by constantly active malevolence on the person devoted to death; its effects being incessantly suggested by the sight of the wax figure. The law at that time considered, and with good reason, that the idea thus embodied constituted high treason. Charles IX. desired the death of the Florentine; Catherine, more powerful, obtained from the Supreme Court, through the intervention of her Councilor Lecamus, that her astologer should be condemned only to the galleys. As soon as the King was dead, Ruggieri was pardoned by an edict of Henri III.'s who reinstated him in his revenues and received him at Court.

Catherine had, by this time, struck so many blows on her son's heart, that at this moment he was only anxious to shake off the yoke she had laid on him. Since Marie Touchet's absence, Charles IX., having nothing to occupy him, had taken to observing very keenly all that went on around him. He had set very skillful snares for certain persons whom he had trusted, to test their fidelity. He had watched his mother's proceedings, and had kept her in ignorance of his own, making use of all the faults she had inculcated in order to deceive her. Eager to efface the feeling of horror produced in France by the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew, he took an active interest in public affairs, presided at the Council, and tried by well planned measures to seize the reins of government. Though the Queen might have attempted to conteract her son's endeavors by using all the influence that maternal authority and her habit of dominion could have over his mind, the downward course of distrust is so rapid that, at the first leap, the son had gone too far to be recalled.

On the day when his mother's words to the King of Poland were repeated to Charles IX., he already felt so ill that the most hideous notions dawned on his mind; and when such suspicions take possession of a son and a King nothing can remove them. In fact, on his deathbed his mother was obliged to interrupt him, exclaiming, "Do not say that, Monsieur!" when Charles IX., intrusting his wife and daughter to the care of Henri IV., was about to put him on his guard against Catherine.

Though Charles IX. never failed in the superficial respect of which she was so jealous, and she never called the Kings, her sons, anything but Monsieur, the Queen-mother had, for some months past, detected in Charles's manner the ill-disguised irony of revenge held in suspense. But he must be a clever man who could deceive Catherine. She held in her hand this conspiracy of the Duc d'Alençon and la Mole, so as to be able to divert Charles's efforts at emancipation by this new rivalry of a brother; but before making use of it, she was anxious to dissipate the want of confidence which might make her reconciliation with the King impossible—for how could he leave the power in the hands of a mother who was capable of poisoning him?

Indeed, at this juncture she thought herself so far in danger that she had sent for Strozzi, her cousin, a soldier famous for his death. She held secret

councils with Birague and the Gondi, and never had she so frequently consulted the oracle of the Hôtel de Soissons.

Though long habits of dissimulation and advancing years had given Catherine that abbess-like countenance, haughty and ascetic, expressionless and yet deep, reserved but scrutinizing, and so remarkable for any student of her portraits, those about her perceived a cloud over this cold, Florentine mirror. No sovereign was ever a more imposing figure than this woman had made herself since the day when she had succeeded in coercing the Guises after the death of Francis II. Her black velvet hood, with a peak over the forehead, for she never went out of mourning for Henri II., was, as it were, a womanly cowl round her cold, imperious features, to which she could, however, on occasion, give insinuating Italian charm. She was so well made, that she introduced the fashion for women to ride on horseback in such a way as to display their legs; this is enough to prove that hers were of perfect form. Every lady in Europe thenceforth rode on a side-saddle, *à la planchette,* for France had long set the fashions.

To anyone who can picture this impressive figure, the scene in the great room that evening has an imposing aspect. The two Queens, so unlike in spirit, in beauty, and in dress, and almost at daggers drawn, were both much too absent-minded to give the impetus for which the courtiers waited to raise their spirits.

The dead secret of the drama which, for the past six months, the son and mother had been cautiously playing, was guessed by some of their followers; the Italians, more especially, had kept an attentive lookout, for if Catherine should lose the game, they would all be the victims. Under these circumstances, at a moment when Catherine and her son were vying with each other in subterfuges, the King was the center of observation.

Charles IX., tired by a long day's hunting, and by the serious reflections he brooded over in secret, looked forty this evening. He had reached the last stage of the malady which killed him, and which gave rise to grave suscipions of poison. According to de Thou, the Tacitus of the Valois, the surgeon found unaccountable spots in the King's body (*ex causâ incognitâ reperti livores*). His funeral was even more carelessly conducted than that of Francis II. Charles the Ninth was escorted from Saint-Lazare to Saint-Denis by Brantôme and a few archers of the Guard commanded by the Comte de Solern. This circumstance, added to the mother's supposed hatred of her son, may confirm the accusation brought against her by de Thou; at least it gives weight to the opinion here expressed, that she cared little for any of her children, an indifference which is accounted for by her faith in the pronouncement of astrology. Such a woman could not care for tools that were to break in her hands. Henri III. was the last King under whom she could hope to reign; and that was all.

In our day it seems allowable to suppose that Charles IX. died a natural death. His excesses, his manner of life, the sudden development of his powers, his last struggles to seize the reins of government, his desire to live, his waste

of strength, his last sufferings and his last pleasures, all indicate, to impartial judges, that he died of disease of the lungs, a malady at that time little understood, and of which nothing was known; and its symptoms might lead Charles himself to believe that he was poisoned.

The real poison given him by his mother lay in the evil counsels of the courtiers with whom she surrounded him, who induced him to waste his intellectual and physical powers, and who thus were the cause of a disease which was purely incidental and not congenital.

Charles the Ninth, at this period of his life more than at any other, bore the stamp of a somber dignity not unbecoming in a king. The majesty of his secret thoughts was reflected in his face, which was remarkable for the Italian complexion he inherited from his mother. This ivory pallor, so beautiful by artificial light, and so well suited with an expression of melancholy, gave added effect to his deep blue eyes showing narrowly under thick eyelids, and thus acquiring that keen acumen which imagination pictures in the glance of a king, while their color was an aid to dissimulation. Charles's eyes derived an awe-inspiring look from his high, marked eyebrows—accentuating a lofty forehead—which he could lift or lower with singular facility. His nose was long and broad, and thick at the tip—a true lion's nose; he had large ears; light reddish hair; lips of the color of blood, the lips of a consumptive man; the upper lip thin and satirical, the lower full enough to indicate fine qualities of feeling.

The wrinkles stamped on his brow in early life, when terrible anxieties had blighted its freshness, made his face intensely interesting; more than one had been caused by remorse for the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew, a deed which had been craftily foisted on him; but there were two other lines on his face which would have been eloquent to any student who at that time could have had a special revelation of the principles of modern physiology. These lines made a deep furrow from the cheekbones to each corner of the mouth, and betrayed the efforts made by an exhausted organization to respond to mental strain and to violent physical enjoyment. Charles IX. was worn out. The Queen-mother, seeing her work, must have felt some remorse, unless, indeed, politics stifle such a feeling in all who sit under the purple. If Catherine could have foreseen the effects of her intrigues on her son, she might perhaps have shrunk from them.

It was a terrrible spectacle. The King, by nature so strong, had become weak; the spirit, so nobly tempered, was racked by doubts; this man, the center of authority, felt himself helpless; the naturally firm temper had lost confidence in its power. The warrior's valor had degenerated into ferocity, reserve had become dissimulation, the refined and tender passion of the Valois was an insatiable thirst for pleasure. This great man, misprized, perverted, with every side of his noble spirit chafed to a sore, a king without power, a loving heart without a friend, torn a thousand ways by conflicting schemes, was, at four-and-twenty, the melancholy image of a man who has found everything wanting, who distrusts everyone, who is ready to stake

his all, even his life. Only lately had he understood his mission, his power, his resources, and the obstacles placed by his mother in the way of the pacification of the kingdom; and the light glowed in a broken lamp.

Two men, for whom the King had so great a regard that he had saved one from the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew, and had dined with the other at a time when his enemies accused him of poisoning the King—his chief physician Jean Chapelain, and the great surgeon Ambroise Paré—had been sent for from the country by Catherine, and, obeying the summons in hot haste, arrived at the King's bedtime. They looked anxiously at their sovereign, and some of the courtiers made whispered inquiries, but they answered with due reserve, saying nothing of the sentence each had secretly pronounced. Now and again the King would raise his heavy eyelids and try to conceal from the bystanders the glance he shot at his mother. Suddenly he rose, and went to stand in front of the fireplace.

"M. de Chiverni," said he, "why do you keep the title of Chancellor of Anjou and Poland? Are you our servant or our brother's?"

"I am wholly yours, Sire," replied Chiverni, with a bow.

"Well, then, come to-morrow; I mean to send you to Spain, for strange things are doing at the Court of Madrid, gentlemen."

The King looked at his wife and returned to his chair.

"Strange things are doing everywhere," he added in a whisper to Marshal Tavannes, one of the favorites of his younger days. And he rose to lead the partner of his youthful pleasures into the recess of an oriel window, saying to him—

"I want you; stay till the last. I must know whether you will be with me or against me. Do not look astonished. I am breaking the leading strings. My mother is at the bottom of all the mischief here. In three months I shall either be dead, or be really King. As you love your life, silence! You are in my secret with Solern and Villeroy. If the least hint is given, it will come from one of you three.—Do not keep too close to me; go and pay your court to my mother; tell her that I am dying, and that you cannot regret it. for that I am but a poor creature."

Charles IX. walked round the room leaning on his old favorite's shoulder, and discussing his sufferings with him, to mislead inquisitive persons; then, fearing that his coldness might be too marked, he went to talk with the two Queens, calling Birague to his side.

Just then Pinard glided in at the door and came up to Queen Catherine, slipping in like an eel, close to the wall. He murmured two words in the Queen-mother's ear, and she replied with an affirmative nod. The King did not ask what this meant, but he went back to his chair with a scowl round the room of horrible rage and jealousy. This little incident was of immense importance in the eyes of all the Court. This exertion of authority without any appeal to the King was like the drop of water that makes the glass overflow. The young Queen and Countess Fieschi withdrew without the King's paying her the least attention, but the Queen-mother attended her daughter-in-law to

the door. Though the misunderstanding between the mother and son lent enormous interest to the movements, looks, and attitude of Catherine and Charles IX., their cold composure plainly showed the courtiers that they were in the way; as soon as the Queen had gone they took their leave. At ten o'clock no one remained but certain intimate persons—the two Gondi, Tavannes, the Comte de Solern, Birague, and the Queen-mother.

The King sat plunged in the deepest melancholy. This silence was fatiguing. Catherine seemed at a loss; she wished to retire, and she wanted the King to attend her to the door, but Charles remained obstinately lost in thought; she rose to bid him good-night, Charles was obliged to follow her example; she took his arm, and went a few steps with him to speak in his ear these few words—

"Monsieur, I have matters of importance to discuss with you."

As she left, the Queen-mother met the eyes of the Gondi reflected in a glass, and gave them a significant glance, which her son could not see—all the more so because he himself was exchanging meaning looks with the Comte de Solern and Villeroy; Tavannes was absorbed in thought.

"Sire," said the Maréchal de Retz, coming out of his meditations, "you seem right royally bored. Do you never amuse yourself nowadays? Heaven above us! where are the times when we went gadding about the streets of nights?"

"Yes, those were good times," said the King, not without a sigh.

"Why not be off now?" said M. de Birague, bowing himself out, with a wink at the Gondi.

"I always think of that time with pleasure," cried the Maréchal de Retz.

"I should like to see you on the roofs, M. le Maréchal," said Tavannes. "*Sacré chat d'Italie,* if you might but break your neck," he added in an undertone to the King.

"I know not whether you or I should be nimblest at jumping across a yard or a street; but what I do know is, that neither of us is more afraid of death than the other," replied the Duc de Retz.

"Well, Sire, will you come to scour the town as you did when you were young?" said the Master of the Wardrobe to the King.

Thus at four-and-twenty the unhappy King was no longer thought young, even by his flatterers. Tavannes and the King recalled, like two schoolfellows, some of the good tricks they had perpetrated in Paris, and the party was soon made up. The two Italians, being dared to jump from roof to roof across the street, pledged themselves to follow where the King should lead. They all went to put on common clothes.

The Comte de Solern, left alone with the King, looked at him with amazement. The worthy German, though filled with compassion as he understood the position of the King of France, was fidelity and honor itself, but he had not a lively imagination. King Charles, surrounded by enemies, and trusting no one, not even his wife—who, not knowing that his mother and all her servants were inimical to him, had committed some little indiscretions—was happy to have found in M. de Solern a devotion which justified complete confidence. Savannes and Villeroy were only partly in

the secret. The Comte de Solern alone knew the whole of the King's schemes; and he was in every way very useful to his master, inasmuch as that he had a handful of confidential and attached men at his orders who obeyed him blindly. M. de Solern, who held a command in the Archers of the Guard, had for some days been picking from among his men some who were faithful in their adherence to the King, to form a chosen company. The King could think of everything.

"Well, Solern," said Charles IX., "we were needing a pretext for spending a night out of doors. I had the excuse, of course, of Mme. de Belleville; but this is better, for my mother can find out what goes on at Marie's house."

M. de Solern, as he was to attend the King, asked if he might not go the rounds with some of his Germans, and to this Charles consented. By eleven o'clock the King, in better spirits now, set out with his three companions to explore the neighborhood of the Rue Saint-Honoré.

"I will take my lady by surprise," said Charles to Tavannes as they went along the Rue de l'Autruche.

To make this noctural play more intelligible to those who may be ignorant of the topography of old Paris, it will be necessary to explain the position of the Rue de l'Autruche. The part of the Louvre, begun by Henri II., was still being built amid the wreck of houses. Where the wing now stands looking over the Pont des Arts, there was at that time a garden. In the place of the Colonnade there were a moat and a drawbridge on which, somewhat later, a Florentine, the Maréchal d'Ancre, met his death. Beyond this garden rose the turrets of the Hôtel de Bourbon, the residence of the princes of that branch till the day when the Constable's treason (after he was ruined by the confiscation of his possessions, decreed by Francis I., to avoid having to decide between him and his mother) put an end to the trial that had cost France so dear, by the confiscation of the Constable's estates.

This château, which looked well from the river, was not destroyed till the time of Louis XIV.

The Rue de l'Autruche ran from the Rue Saint-Honoré, ending at the Hôtel de Bourbon on the quay. This street, named de l'Autruche on some old plans, and de l'Austruc on others, has, like many more, disappeared from the map. The Rue des Poulies would seem to have been cut across the ground occupied by the houses nearest to the Rue Saint-Honoré. Authors have differed, too, as to the etymology of the name. Some suppose it to be derived from a certain Hôtel d'Osteriche (*Osterrichen*) inhabited in the fourteenth century by a daughter of that house who married a French nobleman. Some assert that this was the site of the Royal Aviaries, whither, once on a time, all Paris crowded to see a living ostrich.

Be it as it may, this tortuous street was made notable by the residences of certain princes of the blood, who dwelt in the vicinity of the Louvre. Since the Sovereign had deserted the Fauborg Saint-Antoine, where for several centuries he had lived in the Bastille, and removed to the Louvre, many of the nobility had settled near the palace. The Hôtel de Bourbon had its fellow in the old Hôtel d'Alençon in the Rue

Saint-Honoré. This, the palace of the Counts of that name, always an appanage of the Crown, was at this time owned by Henri II.'s fourth son, who subsequently took the title of Duc d'Anjou, and who died in the reign of Henri III., to whom he gave no little trouble. The estate then reverted to the Crown, including the old palace, which was pulled down. In those days a prince's residence was a vast assemblage of buildings; to form some idea of its extent, we have only to go and see the space covered by the Hôtel de Soubise, which is still standing in the Marais. Such a palace included all the buildings necessary to these magnificent lives, which may seem almost problematical to many persons who see how poor is the state of a prince in these days. There were immense stables, lodgings for physicians, liabrarians, chancellor, chaplains, treasurers, officials, pages, paid servants, and lackeys, attached to the prince's person.

Not far from the Rue Saint-Honoré, in a garden belonging to the hôtel, stood a pretty little house built in 1520 by command of the celebrated Duchesse d'Alençon, which had since been surrounded with other houses erected by merchants. Here the King had installed Marie Touchet. Although the Duc d'Alençon was engaged in a conspiracy against the King at that time, he was incapable of annoying him in such a matter.

As the King was obliged to pass by his lady's door on his way down the Rue Saint-Honoré, where at that time highway robbers had no opportunities within the Barrière des Sergents, he could hardly avoid stopping there. While keeping a lookout for some stroke of luck—a belated citizen to be robbed, or the watch to be thrashed—the King scanned every window, peeping in wherever he saw lights, to see what was going on, or to overhear a conversation. But he found his good city in a provokingly peaceful state. On a sudden, as he came in front of the house kept by a famous perfumer named René, who supplied the Court, the King was seized with one of those swift inspirations which are suggested by antecedent observation, as he saw a bright light shining from the topmost window of the roof.

This perfumer was strongly suspected of doctoring rich uncles when they complained of illness; he was credited at Court with the invention of the famous *Elixir à successions*—the Elixir of Inheritance—and had been accused of poisoning Jeanne d'Albret, Henri IV.'s mother, who was buried without her head having been opened, in spite of the express orders of Charles IX., as a contemporary tells us. For two months past the King had been seeking some stratagem to enable him to spy out the secrets of René's laboratory, whither Cosmo Ruggieri frequently resorted. Charles intended, if anything should arouse his suspicions, to take steps himself without the intervention of the police or the law, over whom his mother would exert the influence of fear or of bribery.

It is beyond all doubt that during the sixteenth century, and the years immediately preceding and following it, poisoning had been brought to a pitch of perfection which remains unknown to modern chemistry, but which is indisputably proved by history. Italy, the

cradle of modern science, was at that time the inventor and mistress of these secrets, many of which are lost. Romancers have made such extravagant use of this fact, that whenever they introduce Italians they make them play the part of assassins and poisoners.

But though Italy had then the monopoly of those subtle poisons of which historians tell us, we must regard her supremacy in toxicology merely as part of her pre-eminence in all branches of knowledge and in the arts, in which she led the way for all Europe. The crimes of the period were not hers alone; she served the passions of the age, as she built magnificently, commanded armies, painted glorious frescoes, sang songs, loved queens, and directed politics. At Florence this hideous art had reached such perfection, that a woman dividing a peach with a duke could make use of a knife of which one side only was poisoned, and, eating the untainted half, dealt death with the other. A pair of perfumed gloves introduced a mortal malady by the pores of the hand; poison could be concealed in a bunch of fresh roses of which the fragrance, inhaled but once, meant certain death. Don Juan of Austria, it is said, was poisoned by a pair of boots.

So King Charles had a right to be inquisitive, and it is easy to imagine how greatly the dark suspicions which tormented him added to his eagerness to detect René in the act.

The old fountain, since rebuilt, at the corner of the Rue de l'Arbre-Sec, afforded this illustrious crew the necessary access to the roof of a house, which the King pretended that he wished to invade, not far from René's. Charles, followed by his companions, began walking along the roofs, to the great terror of the good folks awakened by these marauders, who would call to them, giving them some coarsely grotesque name, listen to family squabbles or love-makings, and do some vexatious damage.

When the two Gondi saw Tavannes and the King clambering along the roof adjoining René's, the Maréchal de Retz sat down, saying he was tired, and his brother remained with him.

"So much the better," thought the King, glad to be quit of his spies.

Tavannes made fun of the two Italians, who were then left alone in the midst of perfect silence in a place where they had only the sky above them and the cats for listeners. And the brothers took advantage of this position to speak out thoughts which they never would have uttered elsewhere—thoughts suggested by the incidents of the evening.

"Albert," said the Grand Master to the Marshal, "the King will get the upper hand of the Queen; we are doing bad business so far as our fortunes are concerned by attaching ourselves to Catherine's. If we transfer our services to the King now, when he is seeking some support against his mother, and needs capable men to rely upon, we shall not be turned out like wild beasts when the Queen-mother is banished, imprisoned, or killed."

"You will not get far, Charles, by that road," the Marshal replied. "You will follow your master into the grave, and he has not long to live; he is wrecked by dissipation; Cosmo Ruggieri has foretold his death next year."

"A dying boar has often gored the hunter," said Charles de Gondi. "This

plot of the Duc d'Alençon with the King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé, of which la Mole and Coconnas are taking the onus, is dangerous rather than useful. In the first place, the King of Navarre, whom the Queen-mother hopes to take in the fact, is too suspicious of her, and will have nothing to do with it. He means to get the benefit of the conspiracy and run none of the risks. And now, the last idea is to place the crown on the head of the Duc d'Alençon, who is to turn Calvinist."

"*Budelone!* Dolt that you are, do not you see that this plot enables our Queen to learn what the Huguenots can do with the Duc d'Alençon, and what the King means to do with the Huguenots? For the King is temporizing with them. And Catherine, to set the King riding on a wooden horse, will betray the plot which must nullify his schemes."

"Ay!" said Charles de Gondi, "by dint of taking our advice she can beat us at our own game. That is very good."

"Good for the Duc d'Anjour, who would rather be King of France than King of Poland; I am going to explain matters to him."

"You are going, Albert?"

"To-morrow. Is it not my duty to attend the King of Poland? I shall join him at Venice, where the Signori have undertaken to amuse him."

"You are prudence itself."

"*Che bestia!* I assure you solemnly that there is not the slightest danger for either of us at Court. If there were, should I leave? I would stick to our kind Mistress."

"Kind!" said the Grand Master. "She is the woman to drop her tools if she finds them too heavy."

"*O coglione!* You call yourself a soldier, and are afraid of death? Every trade has its duties, and our duty is to Fortune. When we attach ourselves to monarchs who are the fount of all temporal power, and who protect and ennoble and enrich our families, we have to give them such love as inflames the soul of the martyr for Heaven; when they sacrifice us for the throne we may perish, for we die as much for ourselves as for them, but our family does not perish.—*Ecco;* I have said!"

"You are quite right, Albert; you have got the old duchy of Retz."

"Listen to me," said the Duc de Retz. "The Queen has great hopes of the Ruggieri and their arts to reconcile her to her son. When that artful youth refused to have anything to do with René, our Queen easily guessed what her son's suspicions were. But who can tell what the King has in his pocket? Perhaps he is only doubting as to what fate he intends for his mother; he hates her, you understand? He said something of his purpose to the Queen, and the Queen talked of it to Mme. de Fieschi; Mme. de Fieschi carried it on to the Queen-mother, and since then the King has kept out of his wife's way."

"It was high time——" said Charles de Gondi.

"What to do?" asked the Marshal.

"To give the King something to do," replied the Grand Master, who, though he was on less intimate terms with Catherine than his brother, was not less clear-sighted.

"Charles," said de Retz gravely, "I

have started on a splendid road; but if you want to be a duke, you must, like me, be our Mistress's ready tool. She will remain Queen; she is the strongest. Mme. de Sauves is still devoted to her; and the King of Navarre and the Duc d'Alençon are devoted to Mme. de Sauves; Catherine will always have them in leading strings under this King, as she will have them under King Henri III. Heaven send he may not be ungrateful!"

"Why?"

"His mother does too much for him."

"Hark! There is a noise in the Rue Saint-Honoré," cried Charles de Gondi. "René's door is being locked. Cannot you hear a number of men? They must have taken the Ruggieri."

"The devil! What a piece of prudence! The King has not shown his usual impetuosity. But where will he imprison them?—Let us see what is going on."

The brothers reached the corner of the Rue de l'Autruche at the moment when the King was entering his mistress's house. By the light of the torches held by the gatekeeper they recognized Tavannes and the Ruggieri.

"Well, Tavannes," the Grand Master called out as he ran after the King's companion, who was making his way back to the Louvre, "what adventures have you had?"

"We dropped on a full council of wizards, and arrested two who are friends of yours, and who will explain for the benefit of French noblemen by what means you, who are not Frenchman, have contrived to clutch two Crown offices," said Tavannes, half in jest.

"And the King?" asked the Grand Master, who was not much disturbed by Tavannes's hostility.

"He is staying with his mistress."

"We have risen to where we stand by the most absolute devotion to our masters, a brilliant and noble career which you too have adopted, my dear Duke," replied the Maréchal de Retz.

The three courtiers walked on in silence. As they bid each other goodnight, rejoining their retainers, who escorted them home, two men lightly glided along the Rue de l'Autruche in the shadow of the wall. These were the King and the Comte de Solern, who soon reached the river bank at a spot where a boat and rowers, engaged by the German Count, were awaiting them. In a few minutes they had reached the opposite shore.

"My mother is not in bed," cried the King, "she will see us; we have not made a good choice of our meeting-place."

"She will think some duel is in the wind," said Solern. "And how is she to distinguish who we are at this distance?"

"Well! Even if she sees me!" cried Charles IX. "I have made up my mind now."

The King and his friend jumped on shore, and hurried off towards the Pré aux Clercs. On arriving there, the Comte de Solern, who went first, parleyed with a man on sentry, with whom he exchanged a few words, and who then withdrew to a group of others.

Presently two men, who seemed to be princes by the way the outposts saluted them, left the spot where they

were in hiding behind some broken fencing, and came to the King, to whom they bent the knee; but Charles IX. raised them before they could touch the ground, saying—

"No ceremony; here we are all gentlemen together."

These three were now joined by a venerable old man, who might have been taken for the Chancellor de l'Hôpital, but that he had died the year before. Then all four walked on as quickly as possible to reach a spot where their conversation could not be overheard by their retainers, and Solern followed them at a little distance to keep guard over the King. This faithful servant felt some doubts which Charles did not share, for to him indeed life was too great a burden. The Count was the only witness to the meeting on the King's side.

It soon became interesting.

"Sire," said one of the speakers, "the Connétable de Montmorency, the best friend the King, your father, had, and possessed of all his secrets, agreed with the Maréchal de Saint-André that Mme. Catherine should be sewn up in a sack and thrown into the river. If that had been done, many good men would be alive now."

"I have executions enough on my conscience, Monsieur," replied the King.

"Well, Sire," said the youngest of the four gentlemen, "from the depths of exile Queen Catherine would still manage to interfere and find men to help her. Have we not everything to fear from the Guises, who, nine years since, schemed for a monstrous Catholic alliance, in which your Majesty is not included, and which is a danger to the throne? This alliance is a Spanish invention—for Spain still cherishes the hope of leveling the Pyrenees. Sire, Calvinsim can save France by erecting a moral barrier between this nation and one that aims at the Empire of the world. If the Queen-mother finds herself in banishment, she will throw herself on Spain and the Guises."

"Gentlemen," said the King, "I will have you to know that with your help, and with peace established on a basis of confidence, I will undertake to make every soul in the kingdom quake. By God and every sacred relic! it is time that the royal authority should assert itself. Understand this clearly; so far, my mother is right, power is slipping from your grasp, as it is from mine. Your estates, your privileges are bound to the throne; when you have allowed religion to be overthrown, the hands you are using as tools will turn against the Monarchy and against you.

"I have had enough of fighting ideas with weapons that cannot touch them. Let us see whether Protestantism can make its way if left to itself; about all, let us see what the spirit of that faction means to attack. The Admiral, God be merciful to him, was no enemy of mine. He swore to me that he would restrain the revolt within the limits of spiritual feeling, and in the temporal kingdom secure mastery to the King and submissive subjects. Now, gentlemen, if the thing is still in your power, set an example, and help your Sovereign to control the malcontents who are disturbing the peace of both parties alike. War robs us of all our revenue, and ruins the country; I am weary of this troubled State—so much

so, that, if it should be absolutely necessary, I would sacrifice my mother. I would do more; I would have about me a like number of Catholics and of Protestants, and I would hang Louis XI.'s ax over their heads to keep them equal. If MM. de Guise plot a holy alliance which endangers the Crown, the executioner shall begin on them.

"I understand the griefs of my people, and am quite ready to cut freely at the nobles who bring trouble on our country. I care little for questions of conscience; I mean henceforth to have submissive subjects who will work, under my rule, at the prosperity of the State.

"Gentlemen, I give you ten days to treat with your adherents, to break up your plots, and return to me, who will be a father to you. If you are refractory, you will see great changes. I shall make use of smaller men who, at my bidding, will rush upon the great lords. I will follow the example of a king who pacified his realm by striking down greater men than you are who dared to defy him. If Catholic troops are wanting, I can appeal to my brother of Spain to defend a threatened throne; nay, and if I need a minister to carry out my will, he will lend me the Duke of Alva."

"In that event, Sire, we can find Germans to fight your Spaniards," said one of the party.

"I may remind you, cousin," said Charles IX. coldly, "that my wife's name is Elizabeth of Austria; your allies on that side might fail you. But take my advice; let us fight this alone without calling in the foreigner. You are the object of my mother's hatred, and you care enough for me to play the part of second in my duel with her—well, then, listen. You stand so high in my esteem, that I offer you the office of High Constable; you will not betray us as the other has done."

The Prince thus addressed took the King's hand in a friendly grasp, exclaiming—

"God's 'ounds, brother, that is indeed forgiving evil! But, Sire, the head cannot move without the tail, and our tail is hard to drag along. Give us more than ten days. We still need at least a month to make the rest hear reason. By the end of that time we shall be the masters."

"A month, so be it; Villeroy is my only plenipotentiary. Take no word but his, whatever anyone may say."

"One month," said the three other gentlemen; "that will be enough time."

"Gentlemen," said the King, "we are but five, all men of mettle. If there is any treachery, we shall know with whom to deal."

The three gentlemen left the King with every mark of deep respect and kissed his hand.

As the King recrossed the Seine, four o'clock was striking by the Louvre clock.

Queen Catherine was still up.

"My mother is not gone to bed," said Charles to the Comte de Solern.

"She too has her forge," said the German.

"My dear Count, what must you think of a king who is reduced to conspiracy?" said Charles IX. bitterly, after a pause.

"I think, Sire, that if you would only allow me to throw that women into the river as our young friend said, France would soon be at peace."

"Parricide!—and after Saint-Bartholomew's!" said the King. "No, no—exile. Once fallen, my mother would not have an adherent or a partisan."

"Well, then, Sire," the Count went on, "allow me to take her into custody now, at once, and escort her beyond the frontier; for by to-morrow she will have won you round."

"Well," said the King, "come to my forge; no one can hear us there. Besides, I am anxious that my mother should know nothing of the arrest of the Ruggieri. If she knows I am within, the good lady will suspect nothing, and we will concert the measures for arresting her."

When the King, attended by Solern, went into the low room which served as his workshop, he smiled as he pointed to his forge and various tools.

"I do not suppose," said he, "that of all the kings France may ever have, there will be another with a taste for such a craft. But when I am really King, I shall not forge swords; they shall all be sheathed."

"Sire," said the Comte de Solern, "the fatigues of tennis, your work at the forge, hunting, and—may I say it?—love-making, are chariots lent you by the Devil to hasten your journey to Saint-Denis."

"Ah, Solern!" said the King sadly, "if only you could feel the fire they have set burning in my heart and body. Nothing can slake it.—Are you sure of the men who are guarding the Ruggieri?"

"As sure as of myself."

"Well, in the course of this day I shall have made up my mind. Think out the means of acting, and I will give you my final instructions at five this evening, at Mme. de Belleville's."

The first gleams of daybreak were struggling with the lights in the King's workshop, where the Comte de Solern had left him alone, when he heard the door open and saw his mother, looking like a ghost in the gloom. Though Charles IX. was highly strung and nervous, he did not start, although under the circumstances this apparition had an ominous and grotesque aspect.

"Monsieur," said she, "you are killing yourself——"

"I am fulfilling my horoscopes," he retorted, with a bitter smile. "But you, Madame, are you as ill as I am?"

"We have both watched through the night, Monsieur, but with very different purpose. When you were setting out to confer with your bitterest enemies in the open night, and hiding it from your mother, with the connivance of Tavannes and the Gondi, with whom you pretended to be scouring the town, I was reading dispatches which prove that a terrible conspiracy is hatching, in which your brother the Duc d'Alençon is implicated with your brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, the Prince de Condé, and half the nobility of your kingdom. Their plan is no less than to snatch the Crown from you by taking possession of your person. These gentlemen have already a following of fifty thousand men, all good soldiers."

"Indeed!" said the King incredulously.

"Your brother is becoming a Huguenot," the Queen went on.

"My brother joining the Huguenots?" cried Charles, brandishing the iron bar he held.

"Yes. The Duc d'Alençon, a Huguenot at heart, is about to declare himself. Your sister, the Queen of Navarre, has scarcely a tinge of affection left for you. She loves M. le Duc d'Alençon, she loves Bussy, and she also loves little la Mole."

"What a large heart!" said the King.

"Little la Mole, to grow great," the Queen went on, "can think of no better means than making a King of France to his mind. Then, it is said, he is to be High Constable."

"That damned Margot!" cried the King. "This is what comes of her marrying a heretic——"

"That would be nothing; but then there is the head of the younger branch, whom you have placed near the throne against my warnings, and who only wants to see you all kill each other! The House of Bourbon is the enemy of the House of Valois. Mark this, Monsieur, a younger branch must always be kept in abject poverty, for it is born with the spirit of conspiracy, and it is folly to give it weapons when it has none, or to leave them in its possession when it takes them. The young branches must be impotent for mischief—that is the law of sovereignty. The sultans of Asia observe it.

"The proofs are upstairs in my closet, whither I begged you to follow me when we parted last night, but you had other projects. Within a month, if we do not take a high hand, your fate will be that of Charles the Simple."

"Within a month!" exclaimed Charles, amazed at the coincidence of this period with the term fixed by the princes that very night. "In a month we shall be the masters," thought he to himself, repeating their words. "You have proofs, Madame?" he asked aloud.

"They are unimpeachable, Monsieur; they are supplied by my daughter Marguerite. Terrified by the probable outcome of such a coalition, in spite of her weakness for your brother d'Alençon, the throne of the Valois lay, for once, nearer to her heart than all her amours. She asks indeed, as the reward of her revelation, that la Mole shall go scot free; but that popinjay seems to me to be a rogue we ought to get rid of, as well as the Comte de Coconnas, your brother d'Alençon's right-hand man. As to the Prince de Condé, that boy would agree to anything so long as I may be flung into the river; I do not know if that is his idea of a handsome return on his wedding-day for the pretty wife I got him.

"This is a serious matter, Monsieur. You spoke of predictions! I know of one which says that the Bourbons will possess the throne of the Valois; and if we do not take care, it will be fulfilled. Do not be vexed with your sister, she has acted well in this matter.

"My son," she went on, after a pause, with an assumption of tenderness in her tone, "many evil-minded persons, in the interest of the Guises, want to sow dissension between you and me, though we are the only two persons in the realm whose interests are identical. Reflect. You blame yourself now, I know, for Saint-Bartholomew's night; you blame me for persuading you to it. But Catholicism, Monsieur, ought to be the bond of Spain, France, and Italy, three nations which by a secretly and skillfully worked scheme may, in the course of time, be united under the

House of Valois. Do not forfeit your chances by letting the cord slip which includes these three kingdoms in the pale of the same faith.

"Why should not the Valois and the Medici carry out, to their great glory, the project of Charles V., who lost his head? Let those descendants of Jane the Crazy people the new world which they are grasping at. The Medici, masters of Florence and Rome, will subdue Italy to your rule; they will secure all its advantages by a treaty of commerce and alliance, and recognize you as their liege lord for the fiefs of Piedmont, the Milanese, and Naples over which you have rights. These, Monsieur, are the reasons for the war to the death we are waging with the Huguenots. Why do you compel us to repeat these things?

"Charlemagne made a mistake when he pushed northwards. France is a body of which the heart is on the Gulf of Lyons, and whose two arms are Spain and Italy. Thus we should command the Mediterranean, which is like a basket into which all the wealth of the East is poured to the benefit of the Venetians now, in the teeth of Philip II.

"And if the friendship of the Medici and your inherited rights can thus entitle you to hope for Italy, force, or alliance, or perhaps inheritance, may give you Spain. There you must step in before the ambitious House of Austria, to whom the Guelphs would have sold Italy, and who still dream of possessing Spain. Though your wife is a daughter of that line, humble Austria, hug her closely to stifle her! There lie the enemies of your dominion, since from thence comes aid for the Reformers.—Do not listen to men who would profit by our disagreement, and who fill your head with trouble by representing me as your chief enemy at home. Have I hindered you from having an heir? Is it my fault that your mistress has a son and your wife only a daughter? Why have you not by this time three sons, who would cut off all this sedition at the root?—Is it my part, Monsieur, to reply to these questions? If you had a son, would M. d'Alençon conspire against you?"

As she spoke these words, Catherine fixed her eyes on Charles IX. with the fascinating gaze of a bird of prey on its victim. The daughter of the Medici was beautiful in her way; her real feelings illumined her face, which like that of a gambler at the green-table, was radiant with ambitious greed. Charles IX. saw her no longer as the mother of one man, but, as she had been called, the mother of armies and empires (*mater castrorum*). Catherine had spread the pinions of her genius, and was boldly soaring in the realm of high politics of the Medici and the Valois, sketching the vast plans which had frightened Henri II., and which, transmitted by the Medici to Richelieu, were stored in the Cabinet of the House of Bourbon. But Charles IX., seeing his mother take so many precautions, supposed them to be necessary, and wondered to what end she was taking them. He looked down; he hesitated; his distrust was not to be dispelled by words.

Catherine was astonished to see what deeply founded suspicion lurked in her son's heart.

"Well, Monsieur," she went on, "do

you not choose to understand me? What are we, you and I, compared with the eternity of a royal Crown? Do you suspect me of any purposes but those which must agitate us who dwell in the sphere whence empires are governed?"

"Madame," said he, "I will follow you to your closet—we must act——"

"Act?" cried Catherine. "Let them go their way and take them in the act; the law will rid you of them. For God's sake, Monsieur, let them see us smiling."

The Queen withdrew. The king alone remained standing for a minute, for he had sunk into extreme dejection.

"On which side are the snares?" he said aloud. "Is it she wo is deceiving me, or they? What is the better policy? *Deus! discerne causam meam,*" he cried, with tears in his eyes. "Life is a burden to me. Whether natural or compulsory, I would rather meet death than these contradictory torments," he added, and he struck the hammer on his anvil with such violence that the vaults of the Louvre quaked. "Great God!" he exclaimed, going out and looking up at the sky, "Thou for whose holy religion I am warring, give me the clearness of Thine eyes to see into my mother's heart by questioning the Ruggieri."

The little house inhabited by the Lady of Belleville, where Charles had left his prisoners, was the last but one in the Rue de l'Autruche, near the Rue Saint-Honoré. The street-gate, guarded by two little lodges built of brick, looked very plain at a time when gates and all their accessories were so elaborately treated. The entrance consisted of two stone pillars, diamond-cut, and the architrave was graced with the reclining figure of a woman holding a cornucopia. The gate, of timber covered with heavy iron scroll work, had a wicket peephole at the level of the eye for spying anyone who desired admittance. In each lodge a porter lived, and Charles's caprice insisted that a gatekeeper should be on the watch day and night.

There was a little courtyard in front of the house paved with Venetian mosaic. At that time, when carriages had not been invented, and ladies rode on horseback or in litters, the courtyards could be splendid with no fear of injury from horses or vehicles. We must constantly bear these facts in mind to understand the narrowness of the streets, the small extent of the forecourts, and various other details of the dwellings of the fifteenth century.

The house, of one story above the ground floor, had at the top a sculptured frieze, on which rested a roof sloping up from all the four sides to a flat space at the top. The sides were pierced by dormer windows adorned with architraves and side-posts, which some great artist had chiseled into delicate arabesques. All the three windows of the first floor rooms were equally conspicuous for this embroidery in stone, thrown into relief by the red brick walls. On the ground floor a double flight of outside steps, elegantly sculptured—the balcony being remarkable for a true lovers' knot—led to the house door, decorated in the Venetian style with stone cut into pointed lozenges, a form of ornament that was repeated on the window jambs on each side of the door.

A garden laid out in the fashion of the time, and full of rare flowers, occupied a space behind the house of equal extent with the forecourt. A vine hung

over the walls. A silver pine stood in the center of a grass plot; the flower borders were divided from the turf by winding paths leading to a little bower of clipped yews at the further end. The garden walls, covered with a coarse mosaic of colored pebbles, pleased the eye by a richness of color that harmonized with the hues of the flowers. The garden front of the house, like the front to the court, had a pretty balcony from the middle window over the door; and on both façades alike the architectural treatment of this middle window was carried up to the frieze of the cornice, with a bow that gave it the appearance of a lantern. The sills of the other windows were inlaid with fine marbles let into the stone.

Notwithstanding the perfect taste evident in this building, it had a look of gloom. It was shut out from the open day by neighboring houses and the roofs of the Hôtel d'Alençon which cast their shadow over the courtyard and garden; then absolute silence prevailed. Still, this silence, this subdued light, this solitude, were restful to a soul that could give itself up to a single thought, as in a cloister where we may meditate, or in a snug home where we may love.

Who can fail now to conceive of the interior elegance of this dwelling, the only spot in all his kingdom where the last Valois but one could pour out his heart, confess his sufferings, give play to his taste for the arts, and enjoy the poetry he loved—pleasures denied him by the cares of his most ponderous royalty. There alone were his lofty soul and superior qualities appreciated; there alone, for a few brief months, the last of his life, could he know the joys of fatherhood, to which he abandoned himself with the frenzy which his presentiment of an imminent and terrible death lent to all his actions.

In the afternoon of this day, Marie was finishing her toilet in her oratory—the ladies' boudoir of that time. She was arranging the curls of her fine black hair, so as to leave a few locks to turn over a new velvet coif, and was looking attentively at herself in the mirror.

"It is nearly four o'clock! That interminable Council must be at an end by now," said she to herself. "Jacob is back from the Louvre, where they are greatly disturbed by reason of the number of councilors convened, and by the duration of the sitting. What can have happened, some disaster? Dear Heaven! does *he* know how the spirit is worn by waiting in vain? He is gone hunting, perhaps. If he is amused, all is well. If I see him happy, I shall forget my sorrows——"

She pulled down her bodice round her waist, that there might not be a wrinkle in it, and turned to see how her dress fitted in profile; but then she saw the King reclining on a couch. The carpeted floors deadened the sound of footsteps so effectually, that he had come in without being heard.

"You startled me," she said, with a cry of surprise, which she instantly checked.

"You were thinking of me, then?" said the King.

"When am I not thinking of you?" she asked him, sitting down by his side.

She took off his cap and cloak, and passed her hands through his hair as if to comb it with her fingers. Charles submitted without speaking. Marie

knelt down to study her royal master's pale face, and discerned in it the lines of terrible fatigue and of a more devouring melancholy than any she had ever been able to scare away. She checked a tear, and kept silence, not to irritate a grief she as yet knew nothing of by some ill-chosen word. She did what tender wives do in such cases; she kissed the brow seamed with precocious wrinkles and the hollow cheeks, trying to breathe the freshness of her own spirit into that careworn soul through its infusion into gentle caresses, which, however, had no effect. She raised her head to the level of the King's, embracing him fondly with her slender arms, and then laid her face on his laboring breast, waiting for the opportune moment to question the stricken man.

"My Charlot, will you not tell your poor, anxious friend what are the thoughts that darken your brow and take the color from your dear, red lips?"

"With the exception of Charlemagne," said he, in a dull, hollow voice, "every King of France of the name of Charles has come to a miserable end."

"Pooh!" said she. "What of Charles VIII.?"

"In the prime of life," replied the King, "the poor man knocked his head against a low doorway in the Château d'Amboise, which he was decorating splendidly, and he died in dreadful pain. His death gave the Crown to our branch."

"Charles VII. reconquered his kingdom."

"Child, he died"—and the King lowered his voice—"of starvation, in the dread of being poisoned by the Dauphin, who had already caused the death of his fair Agnes. The father dreaded his son. Now, the son dreads his mother!"

"Why look back on the past?" said she, remembering the terrible existence of Charles VI.

"Why not, dear heart? Kings need not have recourse to diviners to read the fate that awaits them; they have only to study history. I am at this time engaged in trying to escape the fate of Charles the Simple, who was bereft of his crown, and died in prison after seven years' captivity."

"Charles V. drove out the English!" she cried triumphantly.

"Not he, but du Guesclin; for he, poisoned by Charles of Navarre, languished in sickness."

"But Charles IV.?" said she.

"He married three times and had no heir, in spite of the masculine beauty that distinguished the sons of Philip the Handsome. The first Valois dynasty ended in him. The second Valois will end in the same way. The Queen has only brought me a daughter, and I shall die without leaving any child to come, for a minority would be the greatest misfortune that could befall the kingdom. Besides, if I had a son, would he live?—Charles is a name of ill-omen, Charlemagne exhausted all the luck attending it. If I could be King of France again, I would not be called Charles X."

"Who then aims at your crown?"

"My brother d'Alençon is plotting them? No girl was ever barred in side——"

"Monsieur," said Marie, with an irresistible pout, "tell me some merrier tales."

"My dearest treasure," said the King vehemently, "never call me *Monsieur,* even in jest. You remind me of my mother, who incessantly offends me with that word. I feel as if she deprived me of my crown. She says, 'My son' to the Duc d'Anjou, that is to say, the King of Poland."

"Sire," said Marie, folding her hands as if in prayer, "there is a realm where you are adored, which your Majesty fills entirely with glory and strength; and there the word Monsieur means my gentle lord."

She unclasped her hands, and with a pretty action pointed to her heart. The words were so sweetly musical—*musiquées,* to use an expression of the period, applied to love songs—that Charles took Marie by the waist, raised her with the strength for which he was noted, seated her on his knee, and gently rubbed his forehead against the curls his mistress had arranged with such care.

Marie thought this a favorable moment; she ventured on a kiss or two, which Charles allowed rather than accepted; then, between two kisses, she said—

"If my people told the truth, you were scouring Paris all night, as in the days when you played the scapegrace younger son?"

"Yes," said the King, who sat lost in thought.

"Did not you thrash the watch and rob certain good citizens?—And who are the men placed under my guard, and who are such criminals that you have forbidden all communication with them? No girl was ever barred in with greater severity than these men. who have had neither food nor drink. Solern's Germans have not allowed anyone to go near the room where you left them. Is it a joke? Or is it a serious matter?"

"Yes," said the King, rousing himself from his reverie, "last night I went scampering over the roofs with Tavannes and the Gondi. I wanted to have the company of my old comrades in folly. But our legs are not what they were; we did not dare jump across the streets. However, we crossed two courtyards by leaping from roof to roof. The last time, however, when we alighted on a gable close by this, as we clung to the bar of a chimney, we decided, Tavannes and I, that we could not do it again. If either of us had been alone, he would not have tried it."

"You were the first to jump, I will wager."

The King smiled.

"I know why you risk your life so."

"Hah, fair sorceress!"

"You are weary of life."

"Begone with witchcraft! I am haunted by it!" said the King, grave once more.

"My witchcraft is love," said she, with a smile. "Since the happy day when you first loved me, have I not always guessed your thoughts? And if you will suffer me to say so, the thoughts that torment you to-day are not worthy of a king."

"Am I a king?" said he bitterly.

"Can you not be King? What did Charles VII. do, whose name you bear? He listened to his mistress, my lord, and he won back his kingdom, which was invaded by the English then as it is now by the adherents of the New

Religion. Your last act of State opened the road you must follow: Exterminate heresy."

"You used to blame the stratagem," said Charles, "and now——"

"It is accomplished," she put in. "Besides, I am of Mme. Catherine's opinion. It was better to do it yourself than to leave it to the Guises."

"Charles VII. had only men to fight aganist, and I have to battle with ideas," the King went on. "You may kill men; you cannot kill words! The Emperor Charles V. gave up the task; his son, Don Philip, is spending himself in the attempt. We shall die of it, we kings. On whom can I depend? On my right, with the Catholics I find the Guises threatening me; on my left, the Calvinists will never forgive the death of my poor Father Coligny, nor the bloodletting of August; besides, they want to be rid of us altogether. And in front of me, my mother——"

"Arrest her; reign alone," said Marie, whispering in his ear.

"I wanted to do so yesterday—but I do not to-day. You speak of it lightly enough."

"There is no such great distance between the daughter of an apothecary and the daughter of a leech," said Marie Touchet, who would often laugh at the parentage falsely given her.

The King knit his brows.

"Marie, take no liberties. Catherine de' Medici is my mother, and you ought to tremble at——"

"But what are you afraid of?"

"Poison!" cried the King, beside himself.

"Poor boy!" said Marie, swallowing her tears, for so much strength united to so much weakness moved her deeply. "Oh!" she went on, "how you make me hate Mme. Catherine, who used to seem so kind; but her kindness seems to be nothing but perfidly. Why does she do me so much good and you so much evil? While I was away in Dauphiné I heard a great many things about the beginning of your reign which you had concealed from me; and the Queen your mother seems to have been the cause of all your misfortunes."

"How?" said the King, with eager interest.

"Women whose soul and intentions are pure rule the men they love through their virtues; but women who do not truly wish them well find a motive power in their evil inclinations. Now the Queen has turned many fine qualities in you into vices, and made you believe that your bad ones were virtues. Was that acting a mother's part?—Be a tyrant like Louis XI., make everybody dreadfully afraid of you, imitate Don Philp, banish the Italians, hunt out the Guises, and confiscate the estates of the Calvinists; you will rise to stand in solitude, and you will save the Crown. The moment is favorable; your brother is in Poland."

"We are two infants in politics," said Charles bitterly. "We only know how to love. Alas! dear heart, yesterday I could think of all this; I longed to achieve great things. Puff! my mother has blown down my house of cards. From afar difficulties stand out as clearly as mountain peaks. I say to myself, 'I will put an end to Calvinism; I will bring MM. de Guise to their senses; I will cut adrift from the Court of Rome; I will rely wholly on the people

of the middle class'; in short, at a distance everything looks easy, but when we try to climb the mountains, the nearer we get, the more obstacles we discern.

"Calvinism in itself is the last thing the party leaders care about; and the Guises, those frenzied Catholics, would be in despair if the Calvinists were really exterminated. Every man thinks of his own interests before all else, and religious opinions are but a screen for insatiable ambition. Charles IX.'s party is the weakest of all; those of the King of Navarre, of the King of Poland, of the Duc d'Alençon, of the Comdés, of the Guises, of my mother, form coalitions against each other, leaving me alone even in the Council Chamber. In the midst of so many elements of disturbance my mother is the stronger, and she has just shown me that my plans are inane. We are surrounded by men who defy the law. The ax of Louis XI. of which you speak is not in our grasp. The Parlement would never sentence the Guises, nor the King of Navarre, nor the Condés, nor my brothers. It would think it was setting the kingdom in a blaze. What is wanted is the courage to command murder; the throne must come to that, with these insolent wretches who have nullified justice; but where can I find faithful hands? The Council I held this morning disgusted me with everything—treachery on all sides, antagonistic interests everywhere!

"I am tired of wearing the crown; all I ask is to die in peace."

And he sank into gloomy somnolence.

"Disgusted with everything!" echoed Marie Touchet sadly, but respecting her lover's heavy torpor.

Charles was, in fact, a prey to utter prostration of mind and body, resulting from over-fatigue of every faculty, and enhanced by the dejection caused by the vast scale of his misfortunes and the evident impossibility of overcoming them in the face of such a multiplicity of difficulties as genius itself takes alarm at. The King's depression was proportionate to the height to which his courage and his ideas had soared during the last few months; and now a fit of nervous melancholy, part, in fact, of his malady, had come over him as he left the long sitting of the Council he had held in his closet. Marie saw that he was suffering from a crisis when everything is irritating and importunate —even love; so she remained on her knees, her head in the King's lap as he sat with his fingers buried in her hair without moving, without speaking, without sighing, and she was equally still. Charles IX. was sunk in the lethargy of helplessness; and Marie, in the dark despair of a loving woman, who can see the border-line ahead where love must end.

Thus the lovers sat for some little time in perfect silence, in the mood when every thought is a wound, when the clouds of a mental storm hide even the remembrance of past happiness.

Marie believed herself to be in some sort to blame for this terrible dejection. She wondered, not without alarm, whether the King's extravagant joy at welcoming her back, and the vehement passion she could not contend with, were not helping to wreck his mind and frame. As she looked up at her lover,

her eyes streaming with tears that bathed her face, she saw tears in his eyes too and on his colorless cheeks. This sympathy, uniting them even in sorrow, touched Charles IX. so deeply, that he started up like a horse that feels the spur. He put his arm round Marie's waist, and before she knew what he was doing had drawn her down on the couch.

"I will be King no more!" he said. "I will be nothing but your lover, and forget everything in that joy. I will die happy, and not eaten up with the cares of a throne."

The tone in which he spoke, the fire that blazed in eyes, just now so dull, instead of pleasing Marie, gave her a terrible pang; at that moment she blamed her love for contributing to the illness of which the King was dying.

"You forget your prisoners," said she, starting up suddenly.

"What do I care about the men? They have my permission to kill me."

"What? Assassins!" said she.

"Do not be uneasy, we have them safe, dear child.—Now, think not of them, but of me. Say, do you not love me?"

"Sire!" she cried.

"Sire!" he repeated, flashing sparks from his eyes, so violent was his first surge of fury at his mistress's ill-timed deference. "You are in collusion with my mother."

"Great God!" cried Marie, turning to the picture over her praying chair, and trying to get to it to put up a prayer. "Oh, make him understand me!"

"What!" said the King sternly. "Have you any sin on your soul?"

And still holding her in his arms, he looked deep into her eyes. "I have heard of the mad passion of one d'Entragues for you," he went on, looking wildly at her, "and since their grandfather Capitaine Balzac married a Visconti of Milan, those rascals hesitate at nothing."

Marie gave the King such a look of pride that he was ashamed. Just then the cry was heard of the infant Charles de Valois from the adjoining room; he was just awake, and his nurse was no doubt bringing him to his mother.

"Come in, la Bourguignonne," said Marie, taking the child from his nurse and bringing him to the King. "You are more of a child than he," said she, half angry, but half appeased.

"He is a fine boy," said Charles IX., taking his son in his arms.

"No one but me can know how like you he is," said Marie. "He has your smile and ways already."

"What, so young?" said the King, smiling.

"Men will never believe such things," said she; "but look, my Charlot, play with him, look at him—now, am I not right?"

"It is true," said the King, startled by a movement on the infant's part, which struck him as the miniature reproduction of a trick of his own.

"Pretty flower!" said his mother. "He will never go away from me; he will never make me unhappy."

The King played with the child, tossing it, kissing it with entire devotion, speaking to it in those vague and foolish words, the onomatopœia of mothers and nurses; his voice was childlike, his brow cleared, joy came back to his sad-

dened countenance; and when Marie saw that her lover had forgotten everything, she laid her head on his shoulder and whispered in his ear—

"Will not you tell me, my Charlot, why you put assassins in my keeping, and who these men are, and what you intend to do with them? And whither were you going across the roofs? I hope there was no woman in the case."

"Then you still love me so well?" said the King, caught by the bright flash of one of those questioning looks which women can give at a critical moment.

"You could doubt me," replied she, as the tears gathered under her beautiful girlish eyelids.

"There are women in my adventure, but they are witches, Where was I?"

"We were quite near here, on the gable of a house," said Marie. "In what street?"

"In the Rue Saint-Honoré, my jewel," said the King, who seemed to have recovered himself, and who, as he recalled his ideas, wanted to give his mistress some notion of the scene that was about to take place here. "As I crossed it in pursuit of some sport, my eyes were attracted by a bright light in a top window of the house inhabited by René, my mother's perfumer and glover—yours too, the whole Court's. I have strong suspicions as to what goes on in that man's house, and if I am poisoned that is where the poison is prepared."

"I give him up to-morrow," said Marie.

"What, you have still dealt with him since I left him?" said the King. "My life was here," he added gloomily, "and here no doubt they have arranged for my death."

"But, my dear boy, I have but just come home from Dauphiné with our Dauphin," said she, with a smile, "and I have bought nothing of René since the Queen of Navarre died.—Well, go on; you climbed up to René's roof——?"

"Yes," the King went on. "In a moment I, followed by Tavannes, had reached a spot whence, without being seen, I could see into the devil's kitchen, and note certain things which led me to take strong measures. Do you ever happen to have noticed the attics that crown that damned Florentine's house? All the windows to the street are constantly kept shut excepting the last, from which the Hôtel de Soissons can be seen, and the column my mother had erected for her astrologer Cosmo Ruggieri. There is a room in this top story with a corridor lighted from the inner yard, so that in order to see what is being done within, a man must get to a perch which no one would ever think of climbing, the coping of a high wall which ends against the roof of René's house. The creatures who placed the alembics there to distill death, trusted to the faint hearts of the Parisians to escape inspection; but they counted without their Charles de Valois. I crept along the gutter, and supported myself against the window jamb with my arm round the neck of a monkey that is sculptured on it."

"And what did you see, dear heart?" said Marie, in alarm.

"A low room where deeds of darkness are plotted," replied the King. "The first thing on which my eyes fell was a tall, old man seated in a chair,

with a magnificent beard like old l'Hôpital's, and dressed, like him, in black velvet. The concentrated rays of a brightly burning lamp fell on his high forehead, deeply furrowed by hollow lines, on a crown of white hair and a calm, thoughtful face, pale with vigils and study. His attention was divided between a manuscript on parchment several centuries old, and two lighted stoves on which some heretical mixtures were cooking. Neither the floor nor the ceiling was visible; they were so covered with animals hung up there, skeletons, dried herbs, minerals, and drugs, with which the place was stuffed; here some books and retorts, with chests full of instruments for magic and astrology; there diagrams for horoscopes, phials, wax figures, and perhaps the poisons he concocts for René in payment for the shelter and hospitality bestowed on him by my mother's glover.

"Tavannes and I were startled, I can tell you, at the sight of this diabolical arsenal; for merely at the sight of it one feels spellbound, and but that my business is to be King of France, I should have been frightened. 'Tremble for us both,' said I to Tavannes.

"But Tavannes's eyes were riveted on the most mysterious object. On a couch by the old man's side lay a girl at full length, of the strangest beauty, as long and slender as a snake, as white as an ermine, as pale as death, as motionless as a statue. Perhaps it was a woman just dug out of her grave, for she seemed to be still wrapped in her shroud; her eyes were fixed, and I could not see her breathe. The old wretch paid no sort of heed to her. I watched him so curiously that his spirit I believe passed into me. By dint of studying him, at last I admired that searching eye, keen and bold, in spite of the chills of age; that mouth, mobile with thoughts that came from what seemed a single fixed desire, graven in a myriad wrinkles. Everything in the man spoke of a hope which nothing can discourage and nothing dismay. His attitude, motionless but full of thrilling life, his features so chiseled, so deeply cut by a passion that has done the work of the sculptor's tool, that mind dead-set on some criminal or scientific purpose, that searching intelligence on the track of Nature though conquered by her, and bent, without having broken, under the burden of an enterprise it will never give up, threatening creation with fire borrowed from itself—— I was fascinated for a moment.

"That old man was more a king than I, for his eye saw the whole world and was its master. I am determined to temper no more swords; I want to float over abysses, as that old man does; his science seems to me a sovereignty. In short, I believe in these occult sciences."

"You, the eldest son, and the defender of the Holy Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church!" cried Marie.

"I."

"Why, what has cove over you? Go on; I will be frightened for you, and you shall be brave for me."

"The old man looked at the clock and rose," the King went on. "He left the room, how I could not see, but I heard him open the window towards the Rue Saint-Honoré. Presently a light shone out, and then I saw another light,

answering to the old man's, by which we could perceive Cosmo Ruggieri on the top of the column.

"'Oh, ho! They understand each other,' said I to Tavannes, who at once thought the whole affair highly suspicious, and was quite of my opinion that we should seize these two men, and at once make a search in their abominable workship. But before proceeding to a raid, we wanted to see what would happen. By the end of a quarter of an hour the door of the laboratory opened, and Cosmo Ruggieri, my mother's adviser—the bottomless pit in which all the Court secrets are buried, of whom wives crave help against their husbands and their lovers, and husbands and lovers take counsel against faithless women, who gains money out of the past and the future, taking it from everyone, who sells horoscopes, and is supposed to know everything,—that half-demon came in, saying to the old man, 'Good-evening, brother.'

"He had with him a horrible little old woman, toothless, hunchbacked, crooked, and bent like a lady's marmoset, but far more hideous; she was wrinkled like a withered apple, her skin was of the color of saffron, her chin met her nose, her mouth was a hardly visible slit, her eyes were like the black spots of the deuce on dice, her brow expressed a bitter temper, her hair fell in gray locks from under a dirty coif; she walked with a crutch; she stank of devilry and the stake; and she frightened us, for neither Tavannes nor I believed that she was a real woman; God never made one so horrible as she.

"She sat down on a stool by the side of the fair white serpent with whom Tavannes was falling in love.

"The two brothers paid no heed to either the old woman or the young one, who, side by side, formed a horrible contrast. On one hand life in death, on the other death in life."

"My sweet poet!" cried Marie, kissing the King.

"'Good-evening, Cosmo,' the old alchemist replied. And then both looked at the stove.—'What is the power of the moon to-night?" the old man asked Cosmo.—'Why, *caro Lorenzo,*' my mother's astrologer replied, 'the high tides of September are not yet over; it is impossible to read anything in the midst of such confusion.'—'And what did the Orient say this evening?'—'He has just discovered,' said Cosmo, 'that there is a creative force in the air which gives back to the earth all it takes from it; he concludes, with us, that everything in this world is the outcome of a slow transformation, but all the various forms are of one and the same matter.'—'That is what my predecessor thought,' replied Lorenzo. 'This morning Bernard Palissy was telling me that the metals are a result of compression, and that fire, which parts all things, joins all things also; fire has the power of compressing as well as that of diffusing. That worthy has a spark of genius in him.'

"Though I was placed where I could not be seen, Cosmo went up to the dead girl, and taking her hand, he said, 'There is someone near! Who is it?'—'The King,' said she.

"I at once showed myself, knocking on the window-pane; Ruggieri opened the window, and I jumped into this

wizard's kitchen, followed by Tavannes.

"'Yes, the King,' said I to the two Florentines, who seemed terror-stricken. 'In spite of your furnaces and books, your witches and your learning, you could not divine my visit.—I am delighted to see the famous Lorenzo Ruggieri, of whom the Queen my mother speaks with such mystery,' said I to the old man, who rose and bowed.—'You are in this kingdom without my consent, my good man. Whom are you working for here, you, who from father to son have dwelt in the heart of the House of the Medici? Listen to me. You have your hand in so many purses, that the most covetous would by this have had their fill of gold; you are far too cunning to plunge unadvisedly into criminal courses, but you ought not either to rush like feather-brains into this kitchen; you must have some secret schemes, you who are not content with gold or with power? Whom do you serve, God or the Devil? What are you concocting here? I insist on the whole truth. I am honest man enough to hear and keep the secret of your undertakings, however blamable they may be. So tell me everything without concealment. If you deceive me, you will be sternly dealt with. But Pagan or Christian, Calvinist or Mohammedan, you have my royal word for it that you may leave the country unpunished, even if you have some peccadilloes to confess. At any rate, I give you the remainder of this night and to-morrow morning to examine your consciences, for you are my prisoners, and you must now follow me to a place where you will be guarded like a treasure.'

"Before yielding to my authority, the two Florentines glanced at each other with a wily eye, and Lorenzo Ruggieri replied that I might be certain that no torture would wring their secrets from them; that in spite of their frail appearance, neither pain nor human feeling had any hold on them. Confidence alone could win from their lips what their mind had in its keeping. I was not to be surprised if at that moment they treated on an equal footing with a king who acknowledged no one above him but God, for that their ideas also came from God alone. Hence they demanded of me such confidence as they would grant. So, before pledging themselves to answer my questions without reserve, they desired me to place my left hand in the young girl's and my right hand in the old woman's. Not choosing to let them suppose that I feared any devilry, I put out my hands. Lorenzo took the right and Cosmo the left, and each placed one in the hand of a woman, so there I was like Jesus Christ between the two thieves. All the time the two witches were studying my hands. Cosmo held a mirror before me, desiring me to look at myself, while his brother talked to the two women in an unknown tongue. Neither Tavannes nor I could catch the meaning of a single sentence.

"We set seals on every entrance to this laboratory before bringing away the men, and Tavannes undertook to keep guard till Bernard Palissy and Chapelain, my physician-in-chief, shall go there to make a close examination of all the drugs stored or made there. It was to hinder their knowing anything of the search going on in their kitchen, and to prevent their communicating with any-

one whatever outside—for they might have sent some message to my mother—that I brought these two demons to be shut up here with Solern's Germans to watch them, who are as good as the stoutest prison walls. René himself is confined to his room under the eye of Solern's groom, and the two witches also. And now, sweetheart, as I hold the key of the Cabala, the kings of Thunes, the chiefs of witchcraft, the princes of Bohemia, the masters of the future, the inheritors of all the famous soothsayers, I will read and know your heart, and at last we will know what is to become of us."

"I shall be very glad if they can lay my heart bare," said Marie, without showing the least alarm.

"I know why necromancers do not frighten you; you cast spells yourself."

"Will you not have some of these peaches?" said she, offering him some fine fruit on a silver gilt plate. "Look at these grapes and pears; I went myself to gather them all at Vincennes."

"Then I will eat some, for there can be no poison in them but the philters distilled from your fingers."

"You ought to eat much fruit, Charles; it would cool your blood, which you scorch by such violent living."

"And ought I not to love you less too?"

"Perhaps——" said she. "If what you love is bad for you,—and I have thought so—I should find power in my love to refuse to let you have it. I adore Charles far more than I love the King, and I want the man to live without the troubles that make him sad and anxious."

"Royalty is destroying me"

"It is so," replied she. "If you were only a poor prince like your brother-in-law the King of Navarre, that wretched debauchee who has not a sou or a stitch of his own, who has merely a poor little kingdom in Spain where he will never set foot, and Béarn in France, which yields him scarcely enough to live on, I should be happy, much happier than if I were really Queen of France."

"But are you not much more than the Queen? King Charles is hers only for the benefit of the Kingdom, for the Queen, after all, is part of our politics."

Marie smiled with a pretty little pout, saying—

"We all know that, my liege.—And my sonnet—is it finished?"

"Dear child, it is as hard to write verses as to draw up an edict of pacification. I will finish them for you soon. Ah God! life sits lightly on me here, would I could never leave you!—But I must, nevertheless, examine the two Florentines. By all the sacred relics, I thought one Ruggieri quite enough in France, and behold there are two! Listen, my dearest heart, you have a good mother-wit, you would make a capital lieutenant of police, for you detect everything——"

"Well, Sire, we women take all we dread for granted, and to us what is probable is certain; there is all our subtlety in two words."

"Well, then, help me to fathom these two men. At this moment every determination I may come to depends on this examination. Are they innocent? Are they guilty?—Behind them stands my mother."

"I hear Jacob on the winding stair," said Marie.

Jacob was the King's favorite body servant, who accompanied him in all his amusements; he now came to ask whether his master would wish to speak with the two prisoners.

At a nod of consent, the mistress of the house gave some orders.

"Jacob," said she, "make everyone in the place leave the house, excepting the nurse and M. le Dauphin d'Auvergne —they may stay. Do you remain in the room downstairs; but first of all shut the windows, draw the curtains, and light the candles."

The King's impatience was so great that, while these preparations were being made, he came to take his place in a large settle, and his pretty mistress seated herself by his side in the nook of a wide, white marble chimney-place, where a bright fire blazed on the hearth. In the place of a mirror hung a portrait of the King, in a red velvet frame. Charles rested his elbow on the arm of the seat, to contemplate the two Italians at his ease.

The shutters shut, and the curtains drawn, Jacob lighted the candles in a sort of candelabrum of chased silver, placing it on a table at which the two Florentines took their stand—seeming to recognize the candlestick as the work of their fellow-townsman, Benvenuto Cellini. Then the effect of this rich room, decorated in the King's taste, was really brilliant. The russet tone of the tapestries looked better than by daylight. The furniture, elegantly carved, reflected the light of the candles and of the fire in its shining bosses. The gilding, judiciously introduced, sparkled here and there like eyes. and gave relief to the brown coloring that predominated in this nest for lovers.

Jacob knocked twice, and at a word brought in the two Florentines. Marie Touchet was immediately struck by the grand presence which distinguished Lorenzo in the sight of great and small alike. This austere and venerable man, whose silver beard was relieved against an overcoat of black velvet, had a forehead like a marble dome. His severe countenance, with two black eyes that darted points of fire, inspired a thrill as of a genius emerged from the deepest solitude, and all the more impressive because its power was not dulled by contact with other men. It was as the steel of a blade that has not yet been used.

Cosmo Ruggieri wore the Court dress of the period. Marie nodded to the King, to show him that he had not exaggerated the picture, and to thank him for introducing her to this extraordinary man.

"I should have liked to see the witches too," she whispered.

Charles IX., sunk again in brooding, made no reply; he was anxiously flipping off some crumbs of bread that happened to lie on his doublet and hose.

"Your science cannot work on the sky, nor compel the sun to shine, M. de Florence," said the King, pointing to the curtains which had been drawn to shut out the gray mist of Paris. "There is no daylight."

"Our science, Sire, enables us to make a sky as we will," said Lorenzo Ruggieri. "The weather is always fair for those who work in a laboratory by the light of a furnace."

"That is true." said the King.—"Well,

Father," said he, using a word he was accustomed to employ to old men, "explain to us very clearly the object of your studies."

"Who will guarantee us impunity?"

"The word of a king," replied Charles, whose curiosity was greatly excited by this question.

Lorenzo Ruggieri seemed to hesitate, and Charles exclaimed—

"What checks you? we are alone."

"Is the King of France here?" asked the old man.

Charles IX. reflected for a moment, then he replied, "No."

"But will he not come?" Lorenzo urged.

"No," replied Charles, restraining an impulse of rage.

The imposing old man took a chair and sat down. Cosmo, amazed at his boldness, dared not imitate his brother.

Charles IX. said, with severe irony—

"The King is not here, Monsieur, but you are in the presence of a lady whose permission you ought to wait for."

"The man you see before you, Madame," said the grand old man, "is as far above kings as kings are above their subjects, and you shall find me courteous, even when you know my power."

Hearing these bold words, spoken with Italian emphasis, Charles and Marie looked at each other and then at Cosmo, who, with his eyes fixed on his brother, seemed to be asking himself, "How will he get himself out of the awkward position we are in?"

In fact, one person only could appreciate the dignity and skill of Lorenzo Ruggieri's first move; not the King, nor his young mistress, over whom the older man had cast the spell of his audacity, but his not less wily brother Cosmo. Though he was superior to the cleverest men at Court, and perhaps to his patroness Catherine de' Medici, the astrologer knew Lorenzo to be his master.

The learned old man, buried in solitude, had gauged the sovereigns of the earth, almost all of them wearied out by the perpetual shifting of politics; for at that time great crises were so sudden, so far reaching, so fierce, and so unexpected! He knew their satiety, their lassitude; he knew with what eagerness they pursued all that was new, strange, or uncommon; and, above all, how glad they were to rise now and then to intellectual regions so as to escape from the perpetual struggle with men and things. To those who have exhausted politics, nothing remains but abstract thought; this Charles V. had proved by his abdication.

Charles IX., who made sonnets and swords to recreate himself after the absorbing business of an age when the throne was in not less ill odor than the King, and when Royalty had only its cares and none of its pleasures, could not but be strangely startled by Lorenzo's audacious negation of his power. Religious impiety had ceased to be surprising at a time when Catholicism was closely inquired into; but the subversion of all religion, assumed as a groundwork for the wild speculations of mystical arts, naturally amazed the King, and roused him from his gloomy absence of mind. Besides, a victory to be won over mankind was an undertaking which would make every other interest seem trivial in the eyes of the Ruggieri. An important debt to be paid depended on

this idea to be suggested to the King; the brothers could not ask for this, and yet they must obtain it. The first thing was to make Charles IX. forget his suspicions by making him jump at some new idea.

The two Italians knew full well that in this strange game their lives were at stake; and the glances—deferent but proud—that they exchanged with Marie and the King, whose looks were keen and suspicious, were a drama in themselves.

"Sire," said Lorenzo Ruggieri, "you have asked for the truth. But to show her to you naked, I must bid you sound the well, the pit, from which she will rise. I pray you let the gentleman, the poet, forgive us for saying what the Eldest Son of the Church may regard as blasphemy—I do not believe that God troubles Himself about human affairs."

Though fully resolved to preserve his sovereign indifference, Charles IX. could not control a gesture of surprise.

"But for that conviction, I should have no faith in the miraculous work to which I have devoted myself. But, to carry it out, I must believe it; and if the hand of God rules all things, I am a madman. So, be it known to the King, we aim at winning a victory over the immediate course of human nature.

"I am an alchemist, Sire; but do not suppose, with the vulgar, that I am striving to make gold. The composition of gold is not the end, but only an incident of our researches; else we should not call our undertaking *Magnum Opus*, the great work. The Great Work is something far more ambitious than that. If I, at this day, could recognize the presence of God in matter, the fire of the furnaces that have been burning for centuries would be extinguished tomorrow at my bidding.

"But make no mistake—to deny the direct interference of God is not to deny God. We place the Creator of all things far above the level to which religions reduce Him. Those who hope for immortality are not to be accused of atheism. Following the example of Lucifer, we are jealous of God, and jealousy is a proof of violent love. Though this doctrine lies at the root of our labors, all adepts do not accept it. Cosmo," said the old man, indicating his brother, "Cosmo is devout; he pays for Masses for the repose of our father's soul, and he goes to hear them. Your mother's astrologer believes in the Divinity of Christ, in the Immaculate Conception, and in Transubstantiation; he believes in the Pope's indulgences, and in hell—he believes in an infinite number of things.—His hour is not yet come, for I have read his horoscope; he will live to be nearly a hundred. He will live through two reigns, and see two kings of France assassinated——"

"Who will be——?" asked the King.

"The last of the Valois and the first of the Bourbons," replied Lorenzo. "But Cosmo will come to my way of thinking. In fact, it is impossible to be an alchemist and a Catholic; to believe in the dominion of man over matter, and in the supreme power of mind."

"Cosmo will live to be a hundred?" said the King, knitting his brows in the terrible way that was his wont.

"Yes, Sire," said Lorenzo decisively. "He will die peacefully in his bed."

"If it is in your power to predict the moment of your death, how can you be

ignorant of the result of your inquiries?" asked the King. And he smiled triumphantly as he looked at Marie Touchet.

The brothers exchanged a swift look of satisfaction.

"He is interested in alchemy," thought they, "so we are safe."

"Our prognostics are based on the existing relations of man to nature; but the very point we aim at is the complete alteration of those relations," replied Lorenzo.

The King sat thinking.

"But if you are sure that you must die, you are assured of defeat," said Charles IX.

"As our predecessors were," replied Lorenzo, lifting his hand and letting it drop with a solemn and emphatic gesture, as dignified as his thoughts. "But your mind has rushed on to the goal of our attempts, Sire; we must come back again, Sire! Unless you know the ground on which our edifice is erected, you may persist in saying that it will fall, and judge this science, which has been pursued for centuries by the greatest minds, as the vulgar judge it."

The King bowed assent.

"I believe, then, that this earth belongs to man, that he is master of it, and may appropriate all the forces, all the elements thereof. Man is not a creature proceeding directly from the hand of God, but the result of the principle diffused throughout the infinite ether, wherein myriads of beings are produced; and these have no resemblance to each other between star and star, because the conditions of life are everywhere different. Ay, my liege, the motion we call life has its source beyond all visible worlds; creation draws from it as the surrounding conditions may require, and the minutest beings share in it by taking all they are able, at their own risk and peril; it is their part to defend themselves from death. This is the sum-total of alchemy.

"If man, the most perfect animal on this globe, had within him a fraction of the Godhead, he could not perish—but he does perish. To escape from this dilemma, Socrates and his school invented the soul. I—the successor of the great unknown kings who have ruled this science—I am for the old theories against the new; I believe in the transmutation of matter which I can see, as against the eternity of a soul which I cannot see. I do not acknowledge the world of souls. If such a world existed, the substances of which the beautiful combination produces your body—and which in Madame are so dazzling—would not separate and resolve themselves after your death to return each to its own place; the water to water, the fire to fire, the metal to metal, just as when my charcoal is burnt its elements are restored to their original molecules.

"Though you say that something lives on, it is not we ourselves; all that constitutes our living self perishes.

"Now it is my living self that I desire to perpetuate beyond the common term of life; it is the present manifestation for which I want to secure longer duration. What! trees live for centuries, and men shall live for years, while those are passive and we are active; while they are motionless and speechless, and we walk and talk! No creature on earth ought to be superior to us either in power or permanency. We have already expanded

our senses; we can see into the stars. We ought to be able to extend our life. I place life above power. Of what use is power if life slips from us?

"A rational man ought to have no occupation but that of seeking—not whether there is another life—but the secret on which our present life is based, so as to be able to prolong it at will!—This is the desire that has silvered my hair. But I walk on boldly in the darkness, leading to battle those intellects which share my faith. Life will some day be ours."

"But how?" cried the King, starting to his feet.

"The first condition of our faith is the belief that this world is for man; you must grant me that," said Lorenzo.

"Well and good, so be it!" said Charles de Valois, impatient, but already fascinated.

"Well, then, Sire, if we remove God from this world, what is left but man? Now let us survey our domain. The material world is composed of elements; those elements have a first principle within them. All these principles resolve themselves into one which is gifted with motion. The number Three in the formula of creation: Matter, Motion, Production!"

"Proof, proof? Pause there!" cried the King.

"Do you not see the effects?" replied Lorenzo. "We have analyzed in our crucibles the acorn from which an oak would have arisen as well as the embryo which would have become a man; from these small masses of matter a pure element was derived to which some force, some motion would have been added. In the absence of a Creator, must not that first principle be able to assume the external forms which constitute our world? For the phenomena of life are everywhere the same. Yes, in metals as in living beings, in plants as in man, life begins by an imperceptible embryo which develops spontaneously. There is a first principle! We must detect it at the point where it acts on itself, where it is one, where it is a principle before it is a creature, a cause before it is an effect; then we shall see it absolute—formless, but capable of assuming all the forms we see it take.

"When we are face to face with this particle or atom, and have detected its motion from the starting point, we shall know its laws; we are thenceforth its masters, and able to impose on it the form we may choose, among all we see; we shall possess gold, having the world, and can give ourselves centuries of life to enjoy our wealth. That is what we seek, my disciples and I. All our powers, all our thoughts are directed to that search; nothing diverts us from it. One hour wasted on any other passion would be stolen from our greatness! You have never found one of your hunting dogs neglectful of the game or the death, and I have never known one of my persevering subjects diverted by a woman or a thought of greed.

"If the adept craves for gold and power, that hunger comes of our necessities; he clutches at fortune as a thirsty hound snatches a moment from the chase to drink, because his retorts demand a diamond to consume, or ingots to be reduced to powder. Each one has his line of work. This one seeks the secret of vegetable nature, he studies the torpid life of plants. he notes the

parity of motion in every species and the parity of nutrition; in every case he discerns that sun, air, and water are needed for fertility and nourishment. Another investigates the blood of animals. A third studies the laws of motion generally and its relation to the orbits of the stars. Almost all love to struggle with the intractable nature of metals; for though we find various elements in everything, we always find metals the same throughout, down to their minutest particles.

"Hence the common error as to our labors. Do you see all these patient toilers, these indefatigable athletes, always vanquished, and always returning to the assault? Humanity, Sire, is at our heels, as your huntsman is at the heels of the pack. It cries to us, 'Hurry on! Overlook nothing! Sacrifice everything, even a man—you who sacrifice yourselves! Hurry onward! Cut off the head and hands of Death, my foe!'

"Yes, Sire, we are animated by a sentiment on which the happiness depends of generations to come. We have buried many men—and what men!—who have died in the pursuit. When we set foot on that road it is not to work for ourselves; we may perish without discovering the secret. And what a death is that of a man who does not believe in a future life! We are glorious martyrs; we bear the selfishness of the whole race in our hearts; we live in our successors. On our way we discover secrets which enrich the mechanical and liberal arts. Our furnaces shed gleams of light which help society to possess more perfect forms of industry. Gunpowder was discovered in our retorts; we shall conquer the thunder yet. Our patient vigils may iverthrow politics."

"Can that be possible!" cried the King, sitting up again on the settle.

"Why not?" replied the Grand Master of the New Templars. *"Tradidit mundum disputationibus!* God has given us the world. Listen to this once again! Man is lord on earth, and matter is his. Every means, every power is at his service. What created us? A motion. What power keeps life in us? A motion? And should not science grasp this motion? Nothing on earth is lost, nothing flies off from our planet to go elsewhere; if it were so, the stars would fall on one another. The waters of the Deluge are all here, and not a drop lost. Around us, above, below, are the elements whence have proceeded the innumerable millions of men who have trodden the earth, before and since the Deluge. What is it that remains to be done? To detect the disintegrating force; on the other hand, to discover the combining force. We are the outcome of a visible toil. When the waters covered our globe, men came forth from them who found the elements of life in the earth's covering, in the atmosphere, and in food. Earth and air, then, contain the first principle of human transformations; these go on under our eyes, by the agency of what is under our eyes; hence we can discover the secret by not confining our efforts to the span of one man's life, but making the task endure as long as mankind itself. We have, in fact, attacked matter as a whole; matter, in which I believe, and which I, Grand Master of our Order, am bent on penetrating.

"Christopher Columbus gave a world

to the King of Spain; I am seeking to give the King of France a people that shall never die.—I, an outpost on the remotest frontier which cuts us off from the knowledge of things, a patient student of atoms, I destroy forms, I dissolve the bonds of every combination, I imitate Death to enable me to imitate Life. In short, I knock incessantly at the door of Creation, and shall still knock till my latest day. When I die, my knocker will pass into other hands not less indefatigable, as unknown giants bequeathed it to me.

"Fabulous images, never understood, such as those of Prometheus, of Ixion, of Adonis, of Pan, etc., which are part of the religious beliefs of every people and in every age, show us that this hope had its birth with the human race. Chaldæa, India, Persia, Egypt, Greece, and the Moors have transmitted Magian lore, the highest of all the occult sciences, the storehouse of the results of generations of watchers. Therein lay the bond of the noble and majestic Order of the Temple. When he burned the Templars, a predecessor of yours, Sir, only burned men; their secrets remain with us. The reconstruction of the Temple is the watchword of an unrecognized people, a race of intrepid seekers, all looking to the Orient of life, all brethren, all inseparable, united by an idea, stamped with the seal of toil. I am the sovereign of this people, their chief by election and not by birth. I guide them all towards the essence of life! Grand Master, Rosicrucians, companions, adepts, we all pursue the invisible molecule which escapes our crucibles, and still evades our sight; but we shall make ourselves eyes manifold more powerful than those bestowed on us by nature; we shall get to the primitive atom, the corpuscular element so perseveringly sought by all the sages who have preceded us in the sublime pursuit.

"Sire, when a man stands astride on that abyss, and has at his command divers so intrepid as my brethren, other human interests look very small; hence we are not dangerous. Religious disputes and political struggles are far from us; we are immeasurably beyond them. Those who contend with nature do not condescend to take men by the throat.

"Moreover, every result in our science is appreciable; we can measure every effect, we can predict it, whereas in the combinations which include men and their interests everything is unstable. We shall submit the diamond to our crucible; we shall make diamonds; we shall make gold! Like one of our craft at Barcelona, we shall make ships move by the help of a little water and fire. We shall dispense with the wind, nay, we shall make the wind, we shall make light and renew the face of empires by new industries!—But we will never stoop to mount a throne to be *gehennaed* by nations."

Notwithstanding his desire to avoid being entrapped by Florentine cunning, the King, as well as his simple-minded mistress, was by this time caught and carried away in the rhetoric and rhodomontade of this pompous and specious flow of words. The lovers' eyes betrayed how much they were dazzled by the vision of mysterious riches spread out before them; they saw, as it were, subterranean caverns in long perspective full of toiling gnomes. The impatience

of curiosity dissipated the alarms of suspicion.

"But, then," exclaimed the King, "you are great politicians, and can enlighten us."

"No, Sire," said Lorenzo simply.

"Why not?" asked the King.

"Sire, it is given to no one to be able to predict what will come of a concourse of some thousands of men; we may be able to tell what one man will do, how long he will live, and whether he will be lucky or unlucky; but we cannot tell how several wills thrown together will act, and any calculation of the swing of their interests is even more difficult, for interests are men *plus* things; only in solitude can we discern the general aspect of the future. The Protestantism that is devouring you will be devoured in its turn by its practical outcome, which, in its day, will become a theory too. Europe, so far, has not gone further than Religion; to-morrow it will attack Royalty."

"Then the night of Saint-Bartholomew was a great conception?"

"Yes, Sire; for when the people triumph, they will have their Saint-Bartholomew. When Religion and Royalty are swept away, the people will attack the great, and after the great they will fall upon the rich. Finally, when Europe is no more than a dismembered herd of men for lack of leaders, it will be swallowed up by vulgar conquerors. The world has presented a similar spectacle twenty times before, and Europe is beginning again. Ideas devour the ages as men are devoured by their passions. When man is cured, human nature will cure itself perhaps. Science is the soul of mankind, and we are its pontiffs; and those who study the soul care but little for the body."

"How far have you gone?" asked the King.

"We move but slowly; but we never lose what we have once conquered."

"So you, in fact, are the King of the Wizards," said Charles IX., piqued at finding himself so small a personage in the presence of this man.

The imposing Grand Master of Adepts flashed a look at him that left him thunder-stricken.

"You are the King of men," replied he; "I am the King of ideas. Besides, if there were real wizards, you could not have burnt them!" he added, with a touch of irony. "We too have our martyrs."

"But by what means," the King went on, "do you cast nativities? How did you know that the man near your window last night was the King of France? What power enabled one of your race to foretell to my mother the fate of her three sons? Can you, the Grand Master of the Order that would fain knead the world,—can you, I say, tell me what the Queen my mother is thinking at this moment?"

"Yes, Sire."

The answer was spoken before Cosmo could pull his brother's coat to warn him.

"You know why my brother, the King of Poland, is returning home?"

"Yes, Sire."

"And why?"

"To take your place."

"Our bitterest enemies are our own kith and kin," cried the King, starting up in a fury, and striding up and down the room. "Kings have no brothers, no

sons, no mother! Coligny was right; my executioners are in the conventicles, they are at the Louvre. You are either impostors or regicides!—Jacob, call in Solern."

"My Lord," said Marie Touchet, "the Ruggieri have your word of honor. You have chosen to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge; do not complain of its bitterness."

The King smiled with an expression of deep contempt; his material sovereignty seemed small in his eyes in comparison with the supreme intellectual sovereignty of old Lorenzo Ruggieri. Charles IX. could scarcely govern France; the Grand Master of the Rosicrucians commanded an intelligent and submissive people.

"Be frank; I give you my word as a gentleman that your reply, even if it should contain the avowal of the worst crimes, shall be as though it had never been spoken," the King said. "Do you study poisons?"

"To know what will secure life, it is needful to know what will cause death."

"You have the secret of many poisons?"

"Yes, but in theory only, and not in practice; we know them, but do not use them."

"Has my mother asked for any?"

"The Queen-mother, Sire, is far too clever to have recourse to such means. She knows that the sovereign who uses poison shall perish by poison; the Borgias, and Bianca, Grand Duchess of Tuscany, are celebrated examples of the dangers incurred by those who use such odious means. At Court everything is known. You can kill a poor wretch outright; of what use, then, is it to poison him? But if you attempt the life of conspicuous persons, what chance is there of secrecy? Nobody could have fired at Coligny but you, or the Queen-mother, or one of the Guises. No one made any mistake about that. Take my word for it, in politics poison cannot be used twice with impunity; princes always have successors.

"As to smaller men, if, like Luther, they become sovereigns by the power of ideas, by killing them you do not kill their doctrine.—The Queen is a Florentine; she knows that poison can only be the instrument of private vengeance. My brother, who has never left her since she came to France, knows how deeply Mme. Diane aggrieved her; she never thought of poisoning her, and she could have done so. What would the King your father have said? No woman would have been more thoroughly justified, or more certain of impunity. But Mme. de Valentinois is alive to this day."

"And the magic of wax images?" asked the King.

"Sire," said Cosmo, "those figures are so entirely innocuous that we lend ourselves to such magic to satisfy blind passions, like physicians who give bread pills to persons who fancy themselves sick. A desperate woman images that by stabbing the heart of an image she brings disaster on the faithless lover it represents. What can we say? These are our taxes."

"The Pope sells indulgences," said Lorenzo Ruggieri, smiling.

"Does my mother make use of such images?"

"Of what use would such futile means be to her who can do what she will?"

"Could Queen Catherine save you at this moment?" asked Charles ominously.

"We are in no danger, Sire," said Lorenzo calmly. "I knew before I entered this house that I should leave it safe and sound, as surely as I know the ill-feeling that the King will bear my brother a few days hence; but, even if he should run some risk, he will triumph. Though the King reigns by the sword, he also reigns by justice," he added, in allusion to the famous motto on a medal struck for Charles IX.

"You know everything; I shall die before long, and that is well," returned the King, hiding his wrath under feverish impatience. "But how will my brother die, who, according to you, is to be Henri III.?"

"A violent death."

"And M. d'Alençon?"

"He will never reign."

"Then Henri de Bourbon will be King?"

"Yes, Sire."

"And what death will he die?"

"A violent death."

"And when I am dead, what will become of Madame?" asked the King, turning to Marie Touchet.

"Mme. de Belleville will marry, Sire."

"You are impostors!—Send them away, my Lord," said Marie Touchet.

"Dear heart, the Ruggieri have my word as a gentleman," said Charles, smiling. "Will Marie have children?"

"Yes—and Madame will live to be more than eighty."

"Must I have them hanged?" said the King to his mistress.—"And my son, the Comte d'Auvergne?" said Charles, rising to fetch the child.

"Why did you tell him that I should marry?" said Marie Touchet to the two brothers during the few moments when they were alone.

"Madame," replied Lorenzo with dignity, "the King required us to tell the truth, and we told it."

"Then it is true?" said she.

"As true as that the Governor of Orleans loves you to distraction."

"But I do not love him," cried she.

"That is true, Madame," said Lorenzo. "But your horoscope shows that you are to marry the man who at this present loves you."

"Could you not tell a little lie for my sake?" said she with a smile. "For if the King should believe your forecast——"

"Is it not necessary that he should believe in our innocence?" said Cosmo, with a glance full of meaning. "The precautions taken by the King against us have given us reason, during the time we spent in your pretty jail, to suppose that the occult sciences must have been maligned in his ears."

"Be quite easy," replied Marie; "I know him, and his doubts are dispelled."

"We are innocent," said the old man haughtily.

"So much the better; for at this moment the King is having your laboratory searched and your crucibles and phials examined by experts."

The brothers looked at each other and smiled.

Marie took this smile for the irony of innocence; but it meant: "Poor simpletons! Do you suppose that if we knew how to prepare poisons, we do not also know how to conceal them?"

"Where are the King's people, then?" asked Cosmo.

"In René's house," replied Marie; and the Ruggieri exchanged the glance which conveyed from each to each the same thought, "The Hôtel de Soissons is inviolable!"

The King had so completely thrown off his suspicions, that when he went to fetch his son, and Jacob intercepted him to give him a note written by Chapelain, he opened it in the certainty of finding in it what his physician told him concerning his visit to the laboratory, where all that had been discovered bore solely on alchemy.

"Will he live happy?" asked the King, showing his infant son to the two alchemists.

"This is Cosmo's concern," said Lorenzo, turning to his brother.

Cosmo took the child's little hand and studied it carefully.

"Monsieur," said Charles IX. to the elder man, "if you are compelled to deny the existence of the spirit to believe that your enterprise is possible, tell me how it is that you can doubt that which constitutes your power. The mind you desire to annihilate is the torch that illumines your search. Ah, ha! Is not that moving while denying the fact of motion?" cried he, and pleased at having hit on this argument, he looked triumphantly at his mistress.

"Mind," said Lorenzo Ruggieri, "is the exercise of an internal sense, just as the faculty of seeing various objects and appreciating their form and color is the exercise of our sight. That has nothing to do with what is assumed as to another life. Mind—thought—is a faculty which may cease even during life with the forces that produce it."

"You are logical," said the King with surprise. "But alchemy is an atheistical science."

"Materialist, Sire, which is quite a different thing. Materialism is the outcome of the Indian doctrines transmitted through the mysteries of Isis to Chaldæa and Egypt, and brought back to Greece by Pythagoras, one of the demi-gods among men; his doctrine of transmigration is the mathematics of materialism, the living law of its phases. Each of the different creations which make up the earthly creation possess the power of retarding the impulse that drags it into another form."

"Then alchemy is the science of sciences!" cried Charles IX., fired with enthusiasm. "I must see you at work."

"As often as you will, Sire. You cannot be more eager than the Queen your mother."

"Ah! That is why she is so much attached to you!" cried the King.

"The House of Medici has secretly encouraged our research for almost a century past."

"Sire," said Cosmo, "this child will live nearly a hundred years; he will meet with some checks, but will be happy and honored, having in his veins the blood of the Valois."

"I will go to see you," said the King, who had recovered his good humor. "You can go."

The brothers bowed to Marie and Charles IX. and withdrew. They solemnly descended the stairs, neither looking at each other nor speaking; they did not even turn to look up at the windows from the courtyard, so sure were they that the King's eye was on them; and, in fact, as they turned to

pass through the gate, they saw Charles IX. at a window.

As soon as the alchemist and the astrologer were in the Rue de l'Autruche, they cast a look in front and behind to see that no one was either following them or waiting for them, and went on as far as the Louvre moat without speaking a word; but there, finding that they were alone, Lorenzo said to Cosmo in the Florentine Italian of the time—

"Affè d' Iddio! como le abbiamo infinocchiato!" (By God, we have caught them finely!)

"Gran mercés! a lui sta di spartojarsi" —(Much good may it do him; he must make what he can of it)—said Cosmo. "May the Queen do as much for me! We have done a good stroke for her."

Some days after this scene, which had struck Marie Touchet no less than the King, in one of those moments when in the fullness of joy the mind is in some sort released from the body, Marie exclaimed—

"Charles, I understand Lorenzo Ruggieri; but Cosmo said nothing."

"That is true," said the King, startled by this sudden flash of light, "and there was as much falsehood as truth in what they said. Those Italians are as slippery as the silk they spin."

This suspicion explains the hatred of Cosmo that the King betrayed on the occasion of the trial on the conspiracy of la Mole and Coconnas. When he found that Cosmo was one of the contrivers of that plot, the King believed himself duped by the two Italians; for it proved to him that his mother's astrologer did not devote himself exclusively to studying the stars, fulminating powder and final atoms. Lorenzo had then left the country.

In spite of many persons' incredulity of such things, the events which followed this scene confirmed the prophecies uttered by the Ruggieri.

The King died three months later. The Comte de Gondi followed Charles IX. to the tomb, as he had been told that he would by his brother, the Maréchal de Retz, a friend of the Ruggieri, and a believer in their foresight.

Marie Touchet married Charles de Balzac, Marquis d'Entragues, Governor of Orleans, by whom she had two daughters. The more famous of these two, the Comte d'Auvergne's half-sister, was Henri IV.'s mistress, and at the time of Biron's conspiracy tried to place her brother on the throne of France and oust the Bourbons.

The Comte d'Auvergne, made Duc d'Angoulême, lived till the reign of Louis XIV. He coined money in his province, altering the superscription; but Louis XIV. did not interfere, so great was his respect for the blood of the Valois.

Cosmo lived till after the accession of Louis XIII.; he saw the fall of the House of Medici in France, and the overthrow of the Concini. History has taken care to record that he died an atheist—that is to say, a materialist.

The Marquise d'Entragues was more than eighty when she died.

Lorenzo and Cosmo had for their disciple the famous Comte de Saint-Germain, who became notorious under Louis XV. The great alchemist was not less than a hundred and thirty years old, the age to which some biographers say

Marion Delorme attained. The Count may have heard from the Ruggieri anecdotes of the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew and of the reigns of the Valois, in which they could at pleasure assume a part by speaking in the first person. The Comte de Saint-Germain is the last professor of alchemy who explained the science well, but he left no writings. The doctrine of the Cabala set forth in this volume was derived from that mysterious personage.

It is a strange thing! Three men's lives, that of the old man from whom this information was obtained, that of the Comte de Saint-Germain, and that of Cosmo Ruggieri, embrace European history from the reign of Francis I. to that of Napoleon. Only fifty lives of equal length would cover the time to as far back as the first known epoch of the world.—"What are fifty generations for studying the mysteries of life?" the Comte de Saint-Germain used to say.

Massimilla Doni

To Jacques Strunz

My dear Strunz:—It would be ungrateful on my part did I not set your name at the head of one of the two stories that I could never have written but by your complaisance and painstaking. Receive this as a friendly confession of the efforts you made (perhaps not altogether successfully) to initiate me into the mystery of musical science. You have taught me, at the least, the sum of the difficulties and laborious work genius must bury in those poems which are for us the source of pleasures divine. You have also given me the opportunity of more than once laughing at the expense of a pretending connoisseur.

I have been taxed with my ignorance, but those so doing were little aware that I had taken counsel of one of our foremost musical critics, and knew not that I had the benefit of his best endeavor. Perhaps I was an inaccurate amenuensis. Should this be so I were indeed a traitor of a translator unknowingly, and still I will ever sign myself one of your friends.

De Balzac.

As EVERYONE versed in such matters must know, the nobility of Venice is the first in Europe. Its *Livre d'Or* (Golden Book) dates prior to the Crusades, from an epoch when Venice, a survivor of Imperial and Christian Rome, which had thrown itself into the water to escape the barbarians, was even then all-puissant and illustrious; the capital of the world of commerce and politics. This brilliant nobility, with a few exceptions, has gone to utter ruin. Among the gondoliers who serve the English—and who may in this read their own future fate as written of history—there are descendants of long-dead Doges bearing names that are older than those of their sovereigns. Upon some bridge

as you sweep past it, if you ever visit Venice, you may admire some handsome girl in tattered garments, a poor child that maybe is a member of one of the most patrician of families. In a nation that has so fallen, it may well be supposed that certain strange characters may be encountered. It cannot astonish that sparks should flash out among ashes.

The nobility of Venice and those of Geneva, the same as those of Poland in earlier days, bore no titles. The name of Quirini, Doria, Brignole, Morosini, Sauli, Mocenigo, Fieschi, Cornaro, or Spinola was sufficient for the haughtiest pride. But all things become corrupt. At this time some of these families have titles. Even at a time when the nobility of the aristocratic republic were each the peer of the other, the title of prince was, in fact, given at Genoa to a member of the family of Doria, sovereigns of the principality of Amalfi. A similar title was used in Venice, having a precedent of ancient legitimacy in Facino Cane, Prince of Varese.

The last Cane of the elder branch left Venice thirty years preceding the fall of the Republic, condemned for various crimes. In the twentieth year of the present century it was represented by a young man by the name of Emilio, and an ancient palace long regarded as one of the chief ornaments of the Grand Canal. This scion of Fair Venice had for his sole fortune the useless palace and an income of fifteen hundred francs a year, the rental of a country-house on the Brenta. This small income spared the handsome Emilio the disgrace of accepting, as was done by many nobles, the indemnity of one franc per day, due to each poverty-stricken patrician by the stipulations of the cession to Austria.

At the beginning of winter this young noble was still staying in a country-house at the base of the Tyrolean Alps; it had been bought by the Duchess Cataneo the spring before. The furniture was, like that of all Italian palaces, rich with handsome silks, hung with exquisite taste, while valuable paintings were favorably hung. There were some by that priest of Genoa known as *il Capucino,* and several by Leonardo da Vinci, Carlo Dolci, Tintoretto, and Titian.

The sloping gardens were filled with the marvels that money has caused to be made. Grottoes of rock and patterns of shells—artistic lunacy—fair terraces, arbors not too light, where the cypress with his tall trunk, the three-cornered pines, and the melancholy olive were intermingled with orange trees, laurels, myrtles, and pools of clear water in which swam blue and golden fishes. It matters not what may be said in favor of the popular English garden, with its unartificial prettiness, yet these trees pruned into the shapes of parasols and birds, the yews being clipped into still more fantastic shapes; this art of luxury, combined natural and artificial court graces; those waterfalls down marble steps, the water so lightly spread that it resembled a gauzy scarf blown aside by the wind and quickly renewed; the bronze statues which silently inhabited the glades; the noble mansion a landmark on every side, uprearing its light outline to the foot of the Alps—the living thoughts animating the marble, the bronze, the trees, this lavish prodigality

was in perfect keeping with the love of a duchess and a gallant youth; for it is a poem removed far from the coarse aims of bruitish nature.

In this palace of the fairies, where one might expect to see a negro slave, wearing a scarlet sash, holding an umbrella over the Duchess's head with one hand, while supporting her long train with the other, this Duchess Cataneo accepted the firmans of Victorine and wore the latest French modes. She had on a fine lawn dress, a wide straw hat, soft shoes, stockings of thread lace that the gentlest zephyr would have wafted away, and over her shoulders a black lace shawl. The one thing that could not have been understood in Paris, where every woman is incased in her dress as a dragon-fly is sheathed in its ring-like armor, was the perfect freedom with which this lovely daughter of Tuscany wore her French drapery; she had Italianized it. The utmost seriousness is accorded her skirt by the Frenchwoman; an Italian scarcely gives it a thought. She does not seek self-protection by a demure glance, for she knows her only armor is assured in a devoted love, a passion as sacred in her own estimation as it is in others'.

At eleven o'clock in the morning, after a ramble, and near a table still strewn with the remnants of an elegant breakfast, the Duchess, who was lolling in a low chair, gave him the freedom of these muslin draperies, not bestowing a frown upon him each time he stirred. Emilio, who was seated by her side, holding one of her hands between both of his, gazed at her in rapt adoration. Ask not if they loved; they loved only too well. They were not conning the same book, as did Paolo and Francesca; not so, for Emilio dared not say: "Let us read."

The glint of those eyes, the gray irises gleaming with streaks of gold starting from the center like beams of light, making her gaze a sweet, star-like radiance, so thrilled him with a nervous rapture that it became almost a spasm. The mere sight of the luxuriant black hair crowning the adored head, kept in due bounds by a band of gold, would cause a singing in his ears, the mad rush of the blood through his veins seeming as if it would burst his heart.

Massimilla, heiress of the Doni, of Florence, was married to the Sicilian Duke Cataneo. Her mother, now dead, had hoped, by fostering this marriage, to leave her daughter rich and happy in the Florentine manner. She thought that her daughter, who emerged from a convent to embark in life, would attain, under love's guidance, the sacred union of heart with heart, which, in a women of Italy, is the all and all. But Massimilla Doni, in her convent, had acquired a genuine liking for a religious life, and, after pledging her troth to the Duke Cataneo, she had the Catholic content to be his wife.

Here was an untenable position. Cataneo considered himself absured as a husband, he only looked for a duchess; when Massimilla took umbrage at his indifference, he with much *sang-froid* bade her look up some *cavaliere servente,* going so far as to offer his services in introducing her to some pretty youths from which to choose. The Duchess wept; he made his exit.

Massimilla gazed about her in the world that crowded her. She was taken

by her mother to the various drawing-rooms of the ambassadors, to the Cascine—anywhere that is was likely young men might be met; she found none to her mind, and determined on travel. Then her mother died; she inherited her property, assumed mourning, and wended to Venice. There she saw Emilio, who, in passing her box at the opera, exchanged a glance of meaning with her. This was all. The Venetian was dumfounded, while the Duchess heard a whisper in her ear: "This is he!"

Emilio was introduced to the Duchess by the Signora Vulpato; he was the constant attendant in her box throughout the winter. Never was a love more ardent in two hearts, never so timid in its advances. The two children were each afraid of the other. Massimilla was not a coquette. She had not a second string to her bow—no *secondo,* no *terzo,* no *patito.*

This handsome pair had now been at the Rivalta for six months. Aged twenty, Massimilla had not abandoned her religious principles to her passion without a severe struggle. Still, although slowly, they had yielded; she was ready at any moment to consummate the love union her mother had made her understand, as she now sat, her hand caressed in that of Emilio.

She was unconscious of the misfortune, a torture to Emilio, which raised up a curious barrier between them. Massimilla, though very young, had the majestic mien ascribed by mythology to Juno, the only goddess which tradition has left without a lover; for Diana, the chaste Diana, loved! Only Jupiter himself could hold his own with his better-half goddess, the fashion upon which English ladies model themselves.

Emilio had placed his mistress far too high ever to touch her. Perhaps a year hence he might not be a victim to this grand mistake which only attacks very young or very old men. But like as the archer who shoots beyond the mark is as far from hitting it as the one whose arrow falls short, so the Duchess found herself between a husband, who knew he was so far from being able to reach the target that he had stopped trying to get there, and a lover who was carried so far past it by the wing-feather of an angel that he could not get back at it. Massimilla could be happy with desire, not understanding its issue; but her lover, sorrowful in his joy, would occasionally obtain a promise from his so-beloved that was perilously near the verge of what many women call "the gulf," and found himself compelled to be satisfied by picking the flowers around the edge, not having more courage than to pluck off the petals, and smothering his love-pangs in his breast.

They had rambled out together that morning, singing such a hymn of love as was repeated by the birds among the branches. Upon their return, the youth, whose state can only be likened to the cherubs who are represented by the painters as having nothing between their heads and their wings, had become so inflamed by passion as to venture a doubt as to the entire devotion of the Duchess, endeavoring to bring her to say:

"What proof can I give you?"

The question had been put with a regal air, and Memmi ardently kissed

the handsome, guileless hand. Then he jumped up in a fury with himself and left Massimilla. The Duchess still reclined in her voluptuous attitude on the couch; but now she shed tears, wondering why so young, so fair as she was, she could not give pleasure to Emilio. Memmi, on the other side, banged his head against the trunks of trees like a hooded falcon. But now came a servant in pursuant of the young Venetian to hand him a letter just come by express.

Marco Vendramini—pronounced also Vendramin in Venetian, which drops many final letters—his only friend, wrote informing him that Facino Cane had died in a Paris hospital. Full proofs of this were at hand, and so the Cane-Memmi were princes of Varese. A more important item to him, he thought, was the engagement at the Fenice of the great tenor Genovese and the no less famous Signora Tinti.

He ran to communicate this glorious tidings to the Duchess, who knew nothing of the curious story which made La Tinti such an object of interest in Italy, so Emilio briefly related it.

This great and famous singer had been but a waiting-maid at a tavern, whose marvelous voice had captivated a wealthy Sicilian noble while traveling. This girl's loveliness—she was then but twelve years of age—being the peer of her voice, her patron had had her brought up in the like manner to which Louis XV. had Mlle. de Romans educated. He then waited most patiently until Clara's voice had been fully trained by an expert professor, by which time she was sixteen, before demanding aught of the treasure so successfully cultivated. La Tinti had made her début last year, and had made captive the three most fastidious capitals in Italy.

"I am quite certain that her great lord is not my husband," said the Duchess.

The equipage was soon ordered and Massimilla set out for Venice for the opening of the season. One evening in November, the new Prince of Varese watched the elegant gondola, navigated by men in livery, belonging to Massimilla; he could not help a retrospective glance at his life: he, whose only servant was an old gondolier of his father's.

"What a farce in fortune! A prince, with fifteen hundred francs a year! Owner of one of the finest palaces in the world, unable to dispose of the statues, wood-work, paintings, sculpture, which, by an Austrian decree, had been made inalienable. To live on a foundation made of driven piles of campeachy wood worth over a million francs, and yet possessing no furniture! Owning gorgeous galleries, and yet living in an attic over the highest arabesque cornice, built of marble brought hither from the Morea—that country through which a Memmius marched as a conqueror in the days of the Romans! To behold the effigies of his ancestors recumbent on their tombs of costly marble in one of the finest churches in Venice, in a chapel adorned with paintings by Titian, Tintoretto, Palma, Bellini, Paul Veronese—and yet debarred the selling a marble Memmi to the English for bread for the living Prince Varese! Genovese, the noted tenor, could earn more in one season by his warbling, the capital the interest of which would be an income this son of the Memmi could live

on. Genovese smokes an Eastern hookah, but the Prince of Varese cannot have even enough cigars!" He tossed the end he was smoking into the water.

The Prince di Varese obtained his cigars at the Duchess's mansion; he would have been enraptured to lay at her feet the riches of the world. It was at her house that he made his only meal, for his whole income was expended on his clothes and his seat at the Fenice. His father's old gondolier was paid by him one hundred francs a year for his wage; to make this sum serve his necessities he could only obtain rice for food. Beside this Emilio retained enough to get himself a cup of black coffee every morning at Florian's to keep him in a state of nervous excitement until the evening; he hoped that this habit, carried to excess, would as surely be his death, in due time, as the use of opium would ultimately kill his friend Vendramin.

"And I am a prince!"

Speaking these words Memmi threw Vendramin's letter into the lagoon, not even stopping to read the conclusion of it; it floated off like a paper-boat launched by a child.

"See, now; Emilio," he muttered to himself, "is but three-and-twenty. He is a better man than Lord Wellington, who has the gout, than the Regent, who has paralysis, than the epileptic royal house of Austria, than the King of France, who——"

But as he thought of the King of France Emilio knit his brow, his skin of ivory became saffron-hued, his eyes filled with tears which hung adown his long lashes. He raised a hand, handsome enough to be painted by Titian, and pushed back his clustering brown hair, and gazed once more at Massimilla's gondola.

"And this impertinent mockery of fate comes even into my affairs of the heart," said he. "My soul and imagination are full of precious talents, yet Massimilla will none of them; she is a Florentine, she will cast me off. I sit by her side a figure of ice, yet her voice and glance fire me with celestial desire! Ah, well, either my highness will end my days with a charge from a pistol, else will the heir of the Cane follow Father Carmagnola's example. We will turn sailors, pirates; it will be really amusing to see how long we can escape the hangman."

Emilio had a vision of the days when the Memmi palace had light streaming forth from every window, when the strains of music were carried afar over the Adriatic gulf, when gondolas by the hundred were made fast to its mooring-posts, the while graceful masked figures and the republican magnates elbowed each other up the wave-kissed marble steps; of the time when its galleries and halls were crowded by intriguers and their victims; when the great banqueting-hall was filled with jolly revelers, the balconies with musicians, and when it seemed to embrace all the populace of Venice, laughing and gesticulating.

Some of the greatest sculptors of many ages had chiseled the brackets of bronze that supported the long-necked, pot-bellied China vases, and the chandeliers holding a thousand candles. Not a country but had given some contribution to the magnificence that ornamental walls and ceilings. But now the panels

had been stripped of the splendid arras. Gone the Turkey carpets, the crystal vases brilliant with flowers, the statues, the paintings; no more joy, no more money, the one means of happiness. The London of the Middle Ages, Venice, was crumbling stone by stone, man by man. The prophetic green weed, kissed by the sea and flung by the sea at the feet of every mansion was, to the Prince, the black border hung by nature, a token of death. But, alas! as a finality, a famous English poet had descended upon fair Venice as a raven upon a corpse, and had croaked out in poetic song—the first, the last word of social humanity—the refrain of a *de profundis*. English poetry! Flung in the face of the city that was the birthplace of the poetry of Italy! Wretched Venice!

Think, then, of the astonishment evinced by Emilio when aroused from his reverie by old Carmagnola crying:

"Serenissimo, the palace is on fire, else have the old Doges arisen from their tombs! See, there are lights showing in the windows of the highest balcony!"

Prince Emilio believed that his dream had become fact by the wave of some magic wand. It was dusk, so without being observed, the old gondolier was able to assist his master ashore, unnoticed by a hustling crops of servants who were buzzing around the landing like bees around a hive. Emilio stole into the great hall, giving upon the finest flight of stairs in the whole of Venice, up which he noiselessly ran to investigate this so strange occurrence.

Prince Emilio made his way to his own bedroom, which he was charmed to find had been made beautifully elegant. He seated himself in a cozy chair of gilded wood, and drew up to where an appetizing cold supper waited him, and without more ado he began to eat.

"There can but be one Massimilla in all this world. Who but she could have thought out this surprise?" he reflected. "She has learned that I am now a prince. It may be that Duke Cataneo is dead, leaving her his fortune; if so, she is doubly as wealthy as before, and she will marry me!"

It gave him appetite. He ate in such manner as would have caused envy in an invalid Cræsus, could such have seen him, and he drank copiously of full-bodied port wine.

"Now can I understand the wise little look she wore as she said: 'Till this evening.' Will she come and break the spell, I wonder? What a fine bed! Such a pretty lamp, too! Really a Florentine idea!"

When Emilio had finished the bottle of port, eaten half a fish, and the greater portion of a French *pâté,* he felt drawn by longing to his bed. Perhaps he had a double attack of intoxication. He pulled aside the coverlet, opened the clothes, then, after doffing his attire in a pretty dressing-room, he lay down to meditate on destiny.

"Ah! I forgot poor Carmagnola, but doubtless my butler and chef will see to him," said he.

Just then in came a waiting-maid, lightly humming a scrap from *Il Barbiere;* she flung a lady's night-dress on a chair, the whole paraphernalia for the night, and said, when this was done:

"Here they are!"

And there entered a young lady dressed in the latest *mode de Paris.*

She might have sat for some fancy English portrait to be engraved for a "Forget-me-not," an "Assembly of Beauties," or a "Book of Beauty."

The Prince quivered with delight, alloyed with fear, for, you must remember, he was in love with Massimilla. But his blood was fired with desire. It agitated him, but did not infuse his soul with that celestially warm glow always felt on a word or look from the Duchess. But the woman was not alone.

The Prince beheld one of those forms believed in by no one when depicted from real life, where we wonder at them, to an imaginary life of mere literary description. The stranger's attire, like that of all Neapolitans, showed five colors, if the black of his hat may be accounted as one; his trousers were olive-brown, a red vest was covered with gilt buttons, his coat had a shade of green, his linen was more yellow than white. His eyes were like glass beads. His nose resembled the ace of clubs, and was awfully long and knobby; it did its very best, in fact, to hide a gash it were a horrible misnomer to dignify with the name of mouth; in this three or four tusks could be seen, endowed, apparently, each with a motion fitting to the rest of the features. His obese ears drooped of their own weight, and gave a whimsical look of a hound to the creature.

Some Hippocrates had doubtless prescribed metallic medicaments to the extent of tainting his skin a blackish hue. His skull was Gothic and was barely supplied with a few, thin white hairs, which, like spun glass, crowned this grewsome face, covered with red blotches. Lastly, though the man was thin and but of medium height, his arms were long and shoulders broad. Despite this hideous aspect, and although he appeared to be about seventy, he did not lack a kind of Cyclopean nobility. His manners were aristocratic and his demeanor that of a man confident in his wealth.

His history could be read, engraved on the mud degraded by ignoble passions from the noble clay. Here was to be seen a man of gentle birth, who, wealthy from his youth up, had given his body over to debauchery for the sake of vulgar enjoyment. Debauchery had replaced the human being with a vile one made after its own likeness. Thousands of bottles of wine had made their way down the cavernous archway under that preposterous nose, but they had left their lees upon his lips. Slow and labored digestion had rotted away his teeth. The light of his eyes had become dimmed by the lamps of the gaming table. The blood, tainted with impurities, had impaired the nervous system. His intellect had deteriorated under the task of digestion upon his life-force. Finally, the passions of purchased love had thinned his hair. Every vice, like a greedy heir, had marked its possession on some portion of this living corpse. The student of Nature will detect in her jests the most ironical. For instance, toads she puts in close vicinity with flowers; she had placed this thing by the rose of love.

"Will you play the violin to-night, my dear Duke?" said the woman, as she loosed a cord to let fall a handsome portière over the door.

"Play the violin!" said Emilio to

himself, "what has occurred in this my palace? Am I sleeping? I am here in that woman's bed and yet she evidently thinks she is in her own house! She has taken off her mantle! Have I, as does Vendramin, inhaled fumes of opium? Am I, too, in one of those ravishing dreams of Venice, such as it was three centuries back?"

The unknown beauty, seated in front of a dressing-table, brilliant under wax-lights, was unfastening her lingerie with quiet calmness.

"Ring for Julia," said she, "I want to get my dress off."

At that moment the Duke noticed that the supper had been tampered with; he glanced about the room, and soon discovered the trousers belonging to the Prince, hanging over a chair-back at the foot of the bed.

"I will not ring, Clarina!" exclaimed the Duke, in a voice shrill in its fury. "I will not play the violin to-night, nor to-morrow night, nor, in fact, ever again——"

"Ta, ta, ta, ta," sang Clarina, on the octaves of one note, flying from one to the other with the ease of a nightingale.

"In spite of that voice, which is the envy of your patron saint, Claire, you are absolutely too impudent, you hussy."

"You have not brought me up to give ear to such abuse!" said she with an assumption of pride.

"Did I bring you up to hide a man in your bed? You are not worthy of either my generosity or hate!"

"A man!—in my bed!" cried Clara, nervously looking around.

"And that, too, after eating our supper as if he were at home!" added the Duke.

"Am I not at home?" exclaimed Emilio. "I am the Prince of Varese; this is my palace."

Saying this, Emilio sat up in bed, his handsome patrician head in a frame of flowered drapery.

First, Clarina laughed, a rushing fit of glee which seizes a young girl when she comes across a ludicrous adventure funny in the extreme. But her laughter soon ceased as she noted what a fine, handsome, and hale-looking young man he was, although but lightly attired; the madness of desire seized her in turn, as it had already done with Emilio; and, as she had no one whom to adore, no qualms of reason bridled her sudden fancy—that of a Sicilian woman in love.

"Though this is the Palazzo Memmi," said the Duke, "I must thank your highness to leave." As he spoke he took upon himself the distant irony of the polished noble and added, "I am at home here."

"Allow me to inform you, Monsieur the Duke, that you are in my bedroom, and not your own," Clarina said at length, as she recovered herself. "If you entertain any suspicions of my virtue, at least give me the benefit of my crime——"

"Suspicions? Say proof positive, my angel!"

"But I swear my innocence," Clarina made answer.

"Explain, then, what do I see in your bed?"

"Old ghost!" said Clarina. "Is it that you believe your eyes before my assertion, if so you have ceased to love me. Go, do not weary my ears! You hear? Then begone, Monsieur the Duke. This young Prince will readily recoup you

the million francs you have expended on me."

"I won't repay anything," muttered Emilio in an undertone.

"But there is nothing due him! A million is too cheap for Clara Tinti when the adorer is so precious ugly. Now, get out," she added to the Duke. "You it was that first dismissed me; now it is I that dismiss you. We are quits."

As the old Duke made a gesture as though to dispute this command, given with a manner equal to Semiramis's best (the part in which La Tinti had earned her renown), the prima donna made a dash at the old monkey and ejected him out the door.

"If you do not leave me in quiet for to-night we never again meet. Understand, too, that *my* never counts for more than yours," said she.

"Quiet?" retorted the Duke with a bitter laugh. "My dear idol, it appears the rather that I leave you *con agitata!*"

The Duke went.

To Emilio this mean acquiescence was no surprise.

Clarina bounded like a fawn from the door to the bed.

"A prince, poor, young, beautiful!" she exclaimed. "Truly, it is a perfect fairy-tale."

La Tinti perched herself on the bed with the innocent glee of an animal, the plant yearning for the sun, the airy undulations of a branch awaiting the zephyr. While unbuttoning the cuffs of her sleeves she commenced singing, not as she sung when winning applause at the Fenice, but a tender warbling, resonant with emotion. Her song was a soft breeze wafting the caresses of her love to his heart.

She stole a timid glance at Emilio, who was quite as much embarrassed as herself, for this lady of the stage had now lost all the boldness that had brightened her eyes and given decision to both voice and gestures as she had dismissed the Duke. She was as humble as a courtesan who has fallen in love.

To depict La Tinti you must call to mind one of our leading French singers when she came out in *Il Fazzoletto,* Garcia's[1] opera, then being sung by an Italian company at the theater on the Rue Louvois. She was so extremely handsome that a poor guardsman of Naples had committed suicide in despair of winning her. La Tinti, whose name was something like that of the famous French singer, was just seventeen, and the unlucky Prince three-and-twenty. What fateful hand of mockery had deemed it a jest to bring the match so near the powder? Here were a fragrant room hung with rose-colored silk bright with numberless wax-lights, a bed draped in lace, a dumb palace—Venice! Two young and handsome creatures! Every ravishing delight at once.

Emilio grasped hastily at his trousers, sprang out of bed, ran into the dressing-room, donned his clothes, came back and hurried toward the door. While dressing he thought:

"Massimila, beloved daughter of the Doni, you in whom the beauty of Italy is a hereditary prerogative; you that are of equal worth to the portrait of Margherita, one of the so few pictures entirely painted by Raphael to his un-

[1] Father of Mme. Malibran and composer of *The Caliph of Bagdad.*

dying glory! My lovely and saintly mistress, shall I have earned you if I flee not from this abyss of flowery temptation? Should I be worthy you if I profaned a heart that is solely yours? No; I will not be caught in that vulgar snare spread for me by my rebellious senses! This girl has her Duke, be mine the Duchess!"

As he lifted the portière he heard a moan. The heroic lover turned around and saw Clarina on her knees, her face hidden in the bedclothes, choking with sobs. Will it be believed? The singer was infinitely lovelier as she knelt, her face unseen, than she was in her confusion and a glowing countenance. The hair drooping over her shoulders, the attitude of a Magdalen, the disorder of her partially unbuttoned dress, the whole living picture had been arranged by the Devil, who, as you are well aware, is a great colorist.

The Prince clapsed an arm around the weeping girl, who slipped from his grasp like a snake, clinging to one foot, which she pressed to her bosom.

"Will you please tell me," said he, jerking his foot from her embrace, "how you come to be here in my palace? How the impecunious Emilio——"

"Emilio Memmi!" exclaimed La Tinti, as she arose. "You said you were a prince!"

"A prince since yesterday."

"You are in love with the Duchess Cataneo!" said she, looking him over from head to foot.

Emilio stood dumb, seeing that the prima donna was smiling at him through her tears.

"Your highness perhaps does not know that the man who had me trained for the stage, the Duke, is himself Cataneo. Nor that your friend Vendramin, desiring to serve you, rented your palace to him for three thousand francs during my season at the Fenice. My dear idol of my desire!" continued she, seizing his hand and drawing him nearer to her, "why fly from me, for whom most men would take the risk of broken bones? See, then, love is always love. It is the same in every place; the sun of our souls; we can warm ourselves wherever it may shine, and here—now—it is high noon. If I do not satisfy you, then tomorrow kill me! But I know I shall live, for I am a daisy!"

Emilio decided to remain. When with a gesture signifying his acquiescence, he noticed a thrill quiver through Clarina, seeming to him like a spark from hell. Never before had love come to him in so subtle a form. At that instant Carmagnola whistled loudly.

"What can he wish with me?" said the Prince.

But bewildered by love, Emilio disregarded the old gondolier's oft-repeated signals.

If you have never traveled in Switzerland, you maybe will read this pen-picture with pleasure. If you have clambered among those mountains you will be glad to be again reminded of its scenery.

In that land of the sublime, in the heart of a bowlder riven by a chasm, a valley as broad as the Avenue de Neuilly in Paris, but six hundred feet deep and cut into ravines, flows a torrent from some fearful height of the Saint-Gothard on the Simplon, which has formed a pool, how wide or how deep I cannot tell, bordered by split-up

cliffs of gneiss upon the top of which meadows are found, with pine trees and great elms—where also grow the violet and strawberry. Here and there a chalet, at the window a rosy-cheeked Swiss girl with yellow hair. As is the mood of the sky so is the water of the lakelet, blue and green: blue, though, as is the sapphire—green as an emerald. There is naught in the world can give such an idea of depth, peace, immensity, heavenly love, eternal happiness, even to the least observant of travelers, the most hurried courier, the most common grocer, as this liquid diamond into which the snow trickles through its own channel, after accumulating on the highest Alps, bored through the live rock, whence it escapes below without a ripple of sound. The limpid sheet of water which overhangs the cascade descends so gently that not a ripple agitates the surface which reflects the chaise as you drive past. The postilion cracks his whip, you pass a crag, cross a bridge: suddenly arises a terrific uproar of waterfalls tumbling one upon another. The water has taken a gigantic leap and is desiccated into a hundred falls, is dashed to finest spray upon the rugged bowlders; a thousand sparkling jets fall from the heights that overtop the ravine and fall precisely in the center of the path that has been cut by the most forceful of active forces.

If you have formed a succinct idea of this landscape, you may see in the waters that slept the passion that Emilio bore the Duchess; in the cascades, leaping like a flock of sheep, lies the idea of his amorous passion, shared with La Tinti. In the midst of his torrent of love a rock was upreared against which he broke. Like Sisyphus, the Prince was always under the stone.

"What under heaven does the Duke with his violin?" he wondered.

"Is it to him I owe this sweet symphony?" he asked Clarina.

"Dear child," for she could read that Emilio was but a child. "My dear child, that man who is at least a hundred and eighteen in the parish-register of vice, but only forty-seven in that of the Church, has one sole joy remaining in life. A fact, all else is smashed, everything is in rags and tatters, his soul, mind, nerves, heart—all in man that can furnish an emotion or impulse, reminding him of heaven in desire or enjoyment, is fast bound in music, or really by one of the effects produced by music, a perfect unison of two voices or of a voice with the top open string of his violin. That old ape sits on my knee, takes his—instrument—he can play fairly well—makes the notes, and I, I imitate them. When at length the instant arrives that it is impossible to distinguish the tone from the violin and that produced by my throat, then does this old man become ecstatic, his dull eyes become light with their last remaining fire, he is happy, intoxicated, he rolls upon the floor in a drunkenness of rapture.

"There is the cause of his giving Genovese so large a price. His is the only tenor voice which, and that only occasionally, forms a perfect unison with mine. We really do exactly sing together perhaps once, perhaps twice (or the Duke imagines that we do, the same thing), and for this imagined pleasure he has become the owner of Genovese; for he is his. The tenor cannot be engaged by any theatrical manager un-

less I, also, am engaged, nor am I allowed to sing save with him. This is the whim that was the occasion of the Duke's bringing me up, to gratify this caprice; I am indebted to him for my talent, beauty, fortune, undoubtedly. He will die of an attack of perfect unison.

"Only the sense of hearing has survived his other faculties; this is the one thread binding him to life. Many a vigorous sprig shoots from a rotten stump. They say there are many men such as he. The Blessed Virgin keep them.

"But you, you are not like this! You can do all you desire—all *I* want you to do, I know!"

About daylight the Prince crept away from her side; he found old Carmagnola lying, sleeping, across the doorway.

"Altezza," said he, "the Duchess sends you this letter."

He handed Emilio a dainty three-corner folded note. The Prince felt faint. He returned to the chamber, fell into a chair, his sight failed, and his hand was shaking as he read:

"My dear Emilio:—Your gondola stopped at your palace. Was it that you were unaware that Cataneo had taken it for Tinti? As you love me, go at once to Vendramin, who informs me that he has a chamber prepared for you at his house. What can I do? Is it possible that I should remain in Venice where Tinti and my husband may be seen together? Say, shall we not return to Friuli? Write but one word to say what letter it was that you cast into the lagoon.

"Massimilla."

The writing, the perfume pervading the paper, revived a myriad of memories in Emilio's mind. The sun of a fervent, single love cast his radiant beams upon the blue deeps, gathered in a fathomless pool, where they shone star-like. The youth could not keep back the tears that sprung to his eyes, for in the languid state caused by his night's satiety he was overwhelmed by the thoughts of that so pure divinity.

While she yet slept, his weeping was heard by Clarina. She sat up in bed, noticed the dejection of her prince, arose and flung herself at his knees.

"An attendant waits an answer," said Carmagnola, as he pushed the portière aside.

"Miserable that you are, you have undone me!" exclaimed Emilio, and he pushed La Tinti away with his foot.

Her entreating look, as she fondled the cruel foot, so begged an explanation that Emilio kicked her unmanly away, so wrathful was he at still finding himself in the toils of the passion that was the cause of his fall.

"You told me to slay you—then die, poisoned viper," said he,

He quit the palace and jumped into the waiting gondola.

"Now pull!" he cried to Carmagnola.

"To where?"

"Where you like!"

The mind of the master was divined by that of the gondolier. By many a circuitous turning he brought the gondola to the steps of a marvelous palace, which you will surely admire when you visit Venice; no traveler but must stop to gaze upon those windows, each of a different design to the others, contesting as to which is the more fantastic. The

lace-work balconies, the corners finished in high, willowy, twisted columns; the string-courses worked by so spirited a chisel that no forms are visible in the stone arabesques. How alluring the doorway! what an air of mystery in the arcade leading to the stairway! One must admire the steps carpeted in an everlasting pattern, one that shall last as long as Venice itself—as gorgeous as though wrought in a Turkish loom—but composed only of marbles inlaid in the same substance, but ivory-white. On entering, marble, wood, and silk could be seen, all showing exquisite marvels of the craftsman's art. Here the Duchess had collected Venetian furniture of antique style; the ceilings had been restored by a master hand.

Emilio swung open a door of carved oak, went down the vaulted hallway, running from front to rear of a Venetian palace, and finally stopped before a door that made his heart increase its beats, it was so strangely familiar. He was perceived by a lady's-maid, who gave him entrance into a library where the Prince found the Duchess prostrate before a Madonna.

He had come to confess and beg forgiveness. Massimilla, praying, had converted him. He and God—naught else dwelt in that heart.

The Duchess arose and, without affectation, held out her hand. Emilio did not take it.

"Did you not see Gianbattista yesterday?" asked she.

"No," he responded.

"That ill-luck has caused me a night of wretchedness. I was afraid of your meeting the Duke—I know his perversity so well. Why did Vendramin rent him your palace?"

"Was it not a good thought, Milla? Your Prince is a pauper!"

The faith of Massimilla in him was so perfect, so beautiful and lovely was she, so glad in his near presence, that the Prince became, as it were, suddenly awake. He went through the experience of a horrid dream, one that often torments people of a lively turn, in which, after finding himself in a ballroom crowded with women in full dress, he becomes all at once aware that he is stark naked, not having on even a shirt. Shame and fear in turn possess him, nothing but awaking can end his misery. So stood Emilio's soul in the presence of his mistress. None but himself knew this, for Massimilla clothed him so completely in virtues that her lover, the one she so adored, was incapable of being stained. Emilio had not taken her hand, so the Duchess ran her fingers through the hair that had so recently been kissed by the prima donna. Thus she discovered that his hand was clammy, his forehead damp.

"What ails you?" she asked, in a tender, flute-like voice.

"Never until this instant have I known the extent of my love for you," he answered.

"Well, my idol, what would you that I should do?" said she.

"Why should she ask me that? What have I done?" he pondered.

"Emilio, say, what letter was that you threw into the canal?"

"Vendramin's. I had not read it to the end, else should I not have gone to my palace and there met the Duke; for

it most likely would have informed me all about the matter."

Massimilla became pallid, but a caress reassured her.

"Stay all day with me; we will go to the opera together. We will not go to Friuli; your company will help me endure the presence of Cataneo," said Massimilla.

Though this could but be torment to her lover, he consented with seeming ecstasy.

If anything can give realism to a foretaste of the sufferings the damned must undergo on finding themselves so unworthy of God, is it not the state of a young man, not entirely polluted, in the presence of a mistress he adores, as he brings into that sanctuary of the divinity he worships the putrid air of the prostitute, and still perceives on his lips the vile taste of infidelity?

Baader has observed, like some Catholic writers, the intimate resemblance between heavenly and human love, and in his lectures illumined things divine by an imagining of erotic love. The piquant flavor of coquettish spice does not spur on affection so much as a gentle, tender sympathy. The *chic* of a trifler in love makes too clear the mark of apposition; it may be transient, it is still unpleasant; but an intimate comprehension depicts a true fusion of souls. The unhappy Emilio was impressed with this unspoken divination which had led the Duchess to pity a fault to her unknown.

Massimilla could permit herself an expansiveness, for she knew that her love was strong in its absence of any sensual aspect. She bravely poured forth her angelic soul; she stripped it bare, the same as, during that diabolical night, La Tinti had unblushingly displayed the soft, voluptuous lines of her body, and her firm, pretty, elastic flesh. To Emilio it seemed as though a conflict was on between the heavenly love of this so pure soul and that of the vehement, passionate, muscular Sicilian.

The day was spent in deep meditations and longing looks. The depths of tenderness were carefully gauged and found to be bottomless. Modesty, who once forgot herself with Love, is the mother of Coquetry, but she needed not to place her hand before her eyes as she looked upon these lovers. For a crowning happiness, an orgy of joy, Massimilla pillowed her lover's head in her white arms; now and again she would coyly press her lips to his, as a bird dips its beak in the translucent crystal of a spring, anon gazing around lest it should be seen. Their fancy wrought upon this kiss, which caused them tumultuous and vibrating rushes of feeling as fevered their blood, as a composer develops a musical fantasy on one idea.

In the evening the lovers went to the theater. The manner of Italian life is on this wise: in the morning, love; in the evening, music; at night, repose. Is it not far preferable, this existence, to that of a land where everyone exhausts his lungs and strength in politics without contributing to the course of affairs as much real benefit as a grain of sand forms in a cloud of dust? Liberty in those so curious countries consists in the right to squabble about public concerns, to look after one's self, to squander time on some patriotic doing, each one more foolish and futile than the last. Here, at Venice, to the contrary, love and its

thousand vagaries, the luscious business of genuine happiness, engrosses each moment of time.

There love is regarded as such a matter of course that the Duchess began to be looked upon as a monstrosity; for despite her violent attachment for Emilio, everyone was confident of her immaculate purity. As for the young man, he was looked upon as a victim to the rigid virtue of his lady love, and the women expressed their pity for the ill-used one. But yet none blamed Massimilla, for Italy is as religious as she is amorous.

Massimilla's box on each recurring evening was the cynosure of every opera-glass; each woman whispered to her lover as she studied the Duchess and her lover:

"How far have they gone?"

Then would the lover make study of Emilio, endeavoring to trace some evidence of success; but finding only an expression of a pure, devoted, but dejected love. Then as the visits between box and box were made would be muttered by the men to the ladies:

"La Cataneo is not yet Emilio's."

"But she is foolish, she will tire him out," answered the older women.

"Perhaps!"[1] would the young wives answer with that so solemn accent which Italians can give to that great word—the grand answer to so many questions.

It came that some women were indignant, the whole affair was badly judged, it was very wrong that religion should be allowed to smother love.

"My angel, give your love to that poor Emilio," said the Signora Vulpato to the Duchess, meeting her on the stairs, as they were leaving.

"I do love him with my whole strength," answered Massimilla.

"Why, then, does he not look happy?"

Massimilla replied by a slight shrug of her shoulders.

Now in France we—France as the increasing mania for things English and English proprieties has made it—cannot form an idea of the interest, serious interest, taken by Venetian society in this affair. Only Vendramin knew Emilio's secret: it was jealously kept between these two nobles, who displayed, for private enjoyment, their coats-of-arms in combination with the motto: *Non amici, frates*—not friends, brothers.

As in every capital in Italy, so especially in Venice, the first night of the operatic season is an event. The Fenice was crowded. But in Italy a woman does not attend the theater to make a show of herself, as in other countries; the box is absolutely as private as her own chamber—she is its mistress. Elegantly draped with silk curtains, she reigns the queen of that dimly-lighted closet; no children, no relatives, no Argus eyes whatever are there to watch. Each box is freehold property, worth a considerable sum of money; some indeed are valued at over thirty thousand lire; one family, the Litta, possess three adjoining ones.

When the men are admitted each takes his seat on one of the couches as he arrives; thus the first-comer, of course, is next to the mistress of the apartment; when all the seats are occupied, should another visitor enter, then the one who

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[1]The Italian *forse*—a universal exclamation.

has been the longest there arises, bids his adieux, and departs. Each then moves up one, so that in turn each is next the queen.

The box belonging to the Duchess was on the parquet-tier, or as the Venetians have it, *pepiano*. There she occupied a place which allowed the brilliant light from the stage to illumine her face, which stood out against the somber background. The noble Florentine attracted every eye by her wide, high brow, snow-white, and wearing a coronet of black hair that gave her an imperial appearance; by the delicate chiselings of her features, which resembled the gentle tenderness of Andrea del Sarto's heads; by the exquisite outline of her face, the velvet eyes, nay, the setting themselves, which proclaimed the bliss of a woman dreaming of happiness, though loving, still pure; at once fascinating, dignified.

In place of *Moses in Egypt* being given, in which La Tinti was to have sung with Genovese, *Il Barbiere* was substituted; thus the famous tenor was to appear without the celebrated soprano. It was announced by the manager that it was necessary to change the operas in consequence of La Tinti being seriously indisposed. The Duke was not visible in the theater.

Was Clarina's illness genuine, or was this a scheme of the management to secure two full houses by bringing Genovese and La Tinti out on separate occasions? Emilio could form an opinion of his own while others discussed the matter. The announcement gave him some little remorse, for he well remembered the singer's beauty and her vehement passion; but the Duke's absence was a cause for gratulation for both Prince and Duchess.

And Genovese, why, he sang in such manner as effectually exorcised all remembrance of a blissful night passed in the illicit enjoyment of love, and prolonged the blessed happiness of this so joyous day. Only too glad to alone receive the applause of the house, the tenor made his best efforts; he used every phase of his great powers which have achieved the fame of all Europe. Genovese, who was now but three and twenty, was born at Bergamo; he was a pupil of Velutis, in love with his art, a fine man, handsome, quick to comprehend the spirit in a part, and was developing into that great artist whose destiny is to win fortune and renown. He had a raging success—a term only really true in Italy, where the applause of an audience becomes a frenzy when a singer conduces to its enjoyment.

A number of the friends of the Prince came to chat over the news and to congratulate him on succeeding to his title. The sudden indisposition of La Tinti was much commented on, as it was only last evening that at the Vulpatos', whither she had been taken by the Duke, she had sung in her usual fine style, with health as apparently sound. At the Café Florian, it was rumored that Genovese was violently smitten with Clarina; that she did her utmost to avoid his attentions, and that the manager had vainly endeavored to obtain her consent to appear with him. On the other hand, the Austrian Duke claimed that it was the Duke who was ill and that the prima donna was acting as his nurse; Genovese, he said, had been given orders to make amends to the public.

The visit of the Austrian general to the Duchess was owing to the fact that a French physician had arrived in Venice, who was desirous of an introduction to her.

The Prince, who could see Vendramin strolling around the *parterre,* took this occasion to join him and have a few moments of confidential talk, as he had not seen him for the past three months. As they walked round the aisle which forms the division between the seats in the parquet from the lower tier of boxes, he had an opportunity of noting the reception the Duchess gave the foreigner.

"Who is the Frenchman?" inquired the Prince.

"A physician who has been summoned by Cataneo, who is anxious to know the length of his span of life," said Vendramin. "The Frenchman is awaiting Malfatti, whom he is to meet in consultation."

Like every Italian woman who is in love, the Duchess kept her eyes on Emilio—for in that country a woman is so wholly engrossed in her lover that one scarce ever sees an expressive look cast at any other person.

"*Caro,*" said the Prince to his friend, "don't forget that I slept at your house last night."

"Have you then triumphed?" asked Vendramin, putting his arm around Emilio's waist.

"No; but I hope at some time to be happy with Massimilla."

"Eh, well! then you will excite more envy than any living man. The Duchess is the most perfect woman in Italy. I see things through the radiancy meted out by opium; it is perhaps owing to this that to me she seems the acme of expressed art; nature, unknowingly, has made of her a picture by Raphael. Your passion seems to cause no concern to Cataneo, since he has paid me the thousand crowns which I am to hand over to you."

"So," said Emilio. "Well, remember whatever you may hear, that I sleep at your house every night. Come, for every moment I am away from her, when I might be with her, is torture to me."

Emilio seated himself in the rear of the box and kept silence, listening, enchanted by her wit and grace, to the Duchess. It was not for vanity's sake, but out of love for him, that Massimilla was prodigal of her charming speech, gemmed with Italian wit; her irony struck at things, not persons; her laughter was only caused by the laughable; the merest trifles were seasoned with Attic salt. In any other country she might have been tiresome.

But Italians are, eminently so, an intelligent people; they do not care to make show of their talents when such is not demanded. Their chatter is artless and without strain; it does not fence under the hand of the fencing-master, each one brandishing his own foil, as in France, and who, if he cannot find aught to say, must sit humiliated. Here conversation sparkles with a delicate satire, subtle and graceful, that touches lightly on familiar facts. Instead of an epigram an Italian can glance or smile in a meaning unutterable. They believe, and they are right in this, that to be expected to understand thoughts when they seek only enjoyment is a great bore. Indeed, La Vulpato once said to Massimilla:

"If you love him, you could not talk so well."

Emilio did not join in the small talk; he looked on and listened. Foreigners might have judged from this reserve that the Prince was a person of little intelligence, a common impression of such an Italian who is in love, whereas he was only a lover head over ears in rapture.

Vendramin took a seat by Emilio, facing the Frenchman, who, being a stranger, occupied the place of honor opposite the Duchess.

"Is that gentleman intoxicated?" said the physician in a low voice to Massimilla, as he glanced at Vendramin.

"Yes," was the simple answer.

In that land of amours every passion contains its own excuse; gracious indulgence is granted all forms of error. The Duchess breathed a profound sigh, while pain was expressed on her features.

"You will observe many strange things in our country, monsieur," she continued. "Vendramin exists only by opium, this one lives only in love, that other one is buried in science. Most young men have a passion for some ballet-dancer; their elders are misers. Thus each of us creates for himself some form of happiness or madness."

"The reason is simply because you are all trying to avoid having any fixed ideas; a revolution would be an effectual cure," the physician made answer. "The Genoese regrets his republic; the Milanese hungers for independence; your Piedmontese strongly desires a constitutional form of government; the Roman cries for liberty——"

"Of which it understands nothing," interrupted the Duchess. "Alas! we have in Italy a number of men who are idiotic enough to desire your Code, by which woman's influence is sacrificed. A great number of my compatriots have to read your French books—all trashy rhodomontade."

"Trashy!" cried the Frenchman.

"See, now, monsieur, what can you discover in a book that is better than we have in our hearts?" said the Duchess. "Italy is mad."

"I fail to see that because a country prefers to be its own ruler it is therefore mad!" exclaimed the physician.

"Gracious Heaven!" cried the Duchess, with enthusiasm, "does not that mean purchasing by much bloodshed the dreadful right of being able to quarrel over crazy notions, the same as you do?"

"Then you approve of despotism?" asked the physician.

"Why then should I not give my approval to a plan of government which, in debarring us of books and absurd politics, leaves the men wholly to us?"

"I had an idea that Italians were more patriotic than that," said the Frenchman.

Massimilla laughed in such a sly, mocking manner that her questioner was unable to detect any difference between mockery or serious meaning, neither could he distinguish her real opinion from sarcastic criticism.

"Then you are not a Liberal?" said he.

"May Heaven preserve me!" she answered. "I cannot think of anything that shows worse taste in a woman than to hold such opinions. Could you now love a woman whose heart was occupied by all mankind?"

"All lovers are naturally aristocrats," the Austrian general said, with a smile.

"As I entered the theater," went on the Frenchman, "the first person I saw was yourself. I remarked to his excellency that if any woman could personify a nation, that woman was yourself. I am thus pained to learn that although you possess the beauty, you do not possess the spirit of constitutionalism."

"You are bound, are you not," said the Duchess, motioning to the ballet just being danced, "to find that all our dancers are detestable and our singers horrid? But London and Paris steal from us all our great stars. Paris judges them, London pays them. Genovese and La Tinti will not be ours again for six months."

At this moment the Austrian left the box. Vendramin, the Prince, and the other Italians smilingly exchanged glances, and stole a look at the French physician. He felt that he had done or said some incongruous thing and felt some doubt of himself—a rare thing for a Frenchman. But the enigma was speedily solved.

"Can you believe that it would be prudent of us to speak our minds in the presence of our master?" asked Emilio.

"Here you are in a country of slaves," said the Duchess, in such a tone and a so drooping head which immediately added to her countenance that look for which the physician had vainly looked.

"Vendramin," she continued, speaking so that none but the stranger could hear her, "took to opium-smoking, a horrible idea which an Englishman gave him, who, for totally different reasons to his, wanted an easy death; not death as men gaze on it in the form of a skeleton, but death tagged out in the frippery you Frenchmen call a flag, a virgin shape crowned with laurel and flowers. The figure of a maiden is seen in a cloud of gunpowder smoke borne along on a cannon-ball's flight—otherwise she is laid out on a bed between two courtesans; or, perhaps, she is seen rising in the vapor of a steaming bowl of punch, or maybe in the dazzling blaze of a diamond—a diamond in its native form as carbon.

"Whenever Vendramin wishes, he may, for three Austrian lire, be a Venetian captain, he can navigate the galleys of the Republic, he can conquer the gilded domes of Constantinople. There he can recline on the divans among the Sultan's wives in the seraglio, the while the Grand Turk himself is the vassal of his Venetian victor. Then he returns to Venice; he restores his palace by the treasures of which he despoiled the Ottoman Empire. He can quit the Oriental women for the trebly masked intrigues of his much-beloved Venetians; he can fancy that he is fearful of the jealousy which has ceased to have being.

"For three zevanziger he is able to transport himself into the Council of Ten; he can wield their awful power, and departs from the palace of the Doges to sleep under the guardianship of a pair of flashing eyes; or to climb a balcony to which a fair hand has affixed a silken ladder. He has a woman to love, one to whom opium lends such bewitching grace and ravishing charms that we women of flesh and blood can never emulate.

"Anon he turns over, and finds himself confronted by the fearful frown of a

senator, who grasps a dagger. He hears the poniard plunged into the heart of his mistress. She dies smiling on him, for she has saved his life.

"And she is a happy woman," added the Duchess, glancing at Emilio.

"He makes his escape and hastens to command the Dalmatians to conquer the coast of Illyria for Venice the beloved. He wins forgiveness by his glory; he has a happy domestic life—home, a winter evening, a young wife, sweet children, whom he sees praying to St. Marco, an old nurse their guardian.

"Yes, for three francs' worth of opium he replenishes our empty arsenal, he takes note of the convoys of merchandise entering port, to be distributed to the four quarters of the globe. The force of modern industry and commerce reign no more in London, but here in his own Venice, where the hanging-gardens of Semiramis, the Temple of Jerusalem, Rome's marvels, live once more.

"He gives to the glories of the Middle Ages the added help of the power of steam; by new masterpieces of art under the wing of Venice, who protected it in time past. Monuments, nations crowd his little brain, yet is there room for all. Empires, cities, revolutions, come and disappear in an hour, while only Venice expands and grows; his Venice is the mistress of the seas. She has a population of two millions, holds the scepter of Italy, is the master of the Mediterranean and the Indies!"

"What an opera is the brain of man! What an unplumbed gulf! yea, even to those who, as Gall did, have mapped it out," exclaimed the physician.

"My dear Duchess," said Vendramin, "do not omit to mention the last service that my elixir does me. After listening to ravishing voices and imbibing music at every pore, after I have tasted the keenest delights of Mahomet's paradise, I see then nothing but the most terrible images. I dream of my beloved Venice full of the distorted faces of children, like the dying; of women covered with fearful wounds—torn, shrinking; of men strangled and crushed by the coppered sides of great vessels; I see Venice as she is in reality—festooned in crêpe, naked, robbed, destitute. Pallid phantoms promenade her streets.

"Already the soldiers of Austria grin above me, already my visionary life is merging into my real existence; while six months ago my real life was the bad dream, and that of opium held passion and happiness, great affairs of moment and interests of state. Alas! In my grief I see the sun breaking over my tomb, truth and falsehood blend in a flickering light, neither darkness nor day, but which embraces both."

"Now you see that there is too much patriotism in this head," said the Prince, placing his hand on the heavy, black curly hair that fell over Vandramin's forehead.

"Oh, if he really loves us he will quit the use of his dreadful opium!" said Massimilla.

"I will cure your friend," said the Frenchman.

"Do this and we will love you," said the Duchess. "But we will love you still more, if, on your return to France, you do not calumniate us. We unhappy Italians are already too much crushed by foreign domination to be fairly

judged—for we have known yours," she added, smiling.

"But it was more generous than Austria's," exclaimed the physician eagerly.

"Austria squeezes and returns us nothing: you squeezed to extend and beautify our towns; you gave us stimulation by giving us an army. You had an idea that you could keep Italy, they are expecting they may lose it, therein lies the difference.

"The Austrians provide us what we may term a sort of torpor as stultifying and debasing as themselves; you swamped us by your over-violent energy. But what matters it whether death comes by narcotic or a tonic? Is it not death, just the same, Monsieur the Doctor?"

"Unhappy Italy. To me she is a lovely woman whom France should protect by taking her for his mistress," cried the Frenchman.

"But you could not love us as we would be loved, said the Duchess, smiling. "We desire freedom. The liberty that I wish, though, is not that of your illiberal bourgeois kind which slays all art. I beg," said she in a ringing tone that echoed around the box, "I mean that I would beg for the resuscitation of every Italian republic: their nobles, citizens, the particular privileges for each caste. I would revive the old aristocratic republics with their internecine fights and rivalries that were the conception of our noblest art, that was the making of politics and upreared the great princely houses. When the acts of one government are spread over a vast extent of country they are frittered into nothingness. The republics of Italy were Europe's glory of the Middle Ages. Why, then, has Italy gone under while the Swiss, once her servants, triumph?"

"The republics of Switzerland were good housewives," said the doctor, "they busied themselves about their own matters and were without any reason for showing envy of each other. Your republics were proud queens, they would sooner sell themselves than show courtesy to a neighbor; now they are fallen too low ever to rise again. The Guelphs triumph."

"Do not waste all your pity on us," said the Duchess, in a voice that startled the two friends. "We still remain supreme. Even now in her profound misfortune Italy rules through the better class that throngs her cities.

"Unhappily most of her talented ones came to a knowledge of life so early that they lay supine in poverty-stricken joys. And for those who are agreeable to play the somber game for immortality, they well know how to clutch your gold and force your applause. Grieved over as this land is for its fallen state by idiotic travelers and bypocritical poets—its character traduced by politicians—here, where all appears so languid, feeble, ruinous, not old so much as worn, there yet remain great minds in all departments of life; genius, which shoots forth vigorous suckers like as an old vinestock shoots out canes that afterward bear delicious fruit.

"This people of ancient rulers yet gives birth to kings: Lagrange, Volta, Rasori, Canova, Rossini, Bartolini, Galvani, Vigano, Beccaria, Cicognara, Corvetto. These Italians are chiefs of the scientific heights whereon they stand, of the arts to which they are devoted. It is unnecessary to speak of our singers and

musicians who ravish all Europe in their wonderful perfection; Taglioni, Paganini, and so on. Italy remains the ruler of the world. The world will ever come to her in worship.

"To-night do you go to Florian's; in Capraja you will discover one of our brightest men who loves to remain unknown. No one else, save my master, the Duke, has such a knowledge of music as he possesses; he is known here by everyone as *il Fanatico*."

For some time the Italians eagerly listened to the gage of words between the Duchess and the Frenchman; her eloquence confounded them, and they one by one took their leave to carry the news to other coteries, that La Cataneo had easily defeated the French physician and proved him in the wrong on the question of Italy. This formed the talk of the evening.

Soon after the Frenchman found only himself with the Duchess and Prince Emilio; he saw that they wanted to be alone and he bade farewell. Massimilla bowed with such a sweep of the neck as placed them so far apart, that it might have brought upon her this man's hatred if he had been able to withstand the charms of her eloquence and beauty.

By this toward the close of the opera, Emilio and Massimilla found themselves alone, they clasped each other's hands and listened to the strains of that delightful duet which ends *Il Barbiere*.

"Music alone can give expression to love," said the Duchess, moved by that strain as by two rapturous nightingales.

In Emilio's eye a tear glistened; Massimilla, with the same sublimity of beauty that halos Raphael's Saint-Cecilia, pressed his hand. their knees touched, it seemed as though there was the bloom of a kiss upon her lips. The heart of the Prince seemed surcharged to bursting as the tide of blood rushed there; he beheld on her face a gleam of joy like as when a summer's day shines down upon the golden grain of harvest. He felt as if he heard a choir of angel voices. He would have given his life could he but have felt the fierce fire of passion with which at this time last night the odious Clarina had fired him; now he was scarcely sensible of possessing a body.

Massimilla was much distressed at seeing this tear. She ascribed its origin, in her artlessness, to what she had said of Genovese's *cavatina*.

"But, *carino*," she whispered in Emilio's ear, "are you not superior to every expression of love, as the cause is better than the effect?"

After having handed Massimilla into her gondola, Emilio awaited Vendramin to go with him to Florian's.

The Café Florian at Venice is an institution hard to designate. There merchants transact their business; lawyers use it to talk over their difficult cases. It is an Exchange, green-room, newspaper office, club, confessional, all in one. It is so suited to the wants of the Venetians that many wives never learn the business of their husbands, for when they wish to write a letter they use Florian's for that purpose.

Of course the genus spy is there, but this only serves to whet the wit of the Venetians, who here use the discretion once so celebrated. Numbers of persons put in their whole time at Florian's. Florina's is in fact so necessary to some

men that they even go there between the acts at the opera, and leave the ladies under their charge in the boxes.

As the two friends threaded the narrow streets of the Merceria they did not talk, people were too many, but, turning into the Piazza di San Marco, the Prince remarked:

"Let us not go direct to the café. I want to talk to you, let us stroll around."

He told all about his position and his adventure with Clarina. Vendramin promised that if Emilio, whom he thought had a despair almost akin to madness, would only give him a free hand to deal with Massimilla he would cure him. This gleam of hope came just in time to prevent Emilio from drowning himself on that very night, for, as he recollected the cantatrice, he felt an awful desire to visit her again.

Soon the two friends went to Florian's and entered an inner chamber; there they listened to the town gossip of some of the leading men. The most interesting was, first, the eccentricities of Lord Byron, of whom the Venetians made much fun; and afterward, Cataneo's attachment to La Tinti, for which they were unable to assign any reason, though twenty were suggested. Then came Genovese's début, and, lastly, the tilt between the Duchess and the French physician.

It was when the discussion had grown music-mad that Duke Cataneo entered. He bowed to Emilio most courteously, and this appeared so perfectly natural that none seemed to notice it, while Emilio as courteously returned it. Cataneo, looking around to see if anyone was present whom he knew, at last recognized Vendramin and gave him greeting; he bowed to a wealthy patrician, his banker; and then to the one who chanced to be speaking, a famous fanatic in music, the friend of the Contessa Albrizzo; not unlike a number of those who frequented Florian's, his habit of life was totally unknown. No one knew aught of him more than he himself chose to disclose.

This was Capraja, the nobleman named by the Duchess to the French doctor. This Venetian was of the race of dreamers with a powerful mind that could divine all things. He was a theorist, eccentric, and cared less for celebrity than he would have done for a broken pipe.

His existence was in accord with his ideas. At about ten o'clock, every morning, Capraja appeared beneath the *Procuratie,* but none knew whence he came. He sauntered about Venice smoking cigars. He regularly attended the Fenice, where he sat in the parquet stalls; between acts he strolled over to Florian's, took three or four cups of coffee there each day; his evening ended at the café, and did not leave until about two in the morning. Twelve hundred francs a year was his full outlay; he only ate one meal a day, which he partook of at a restaurant in the Merceria; at a stated hour each day the master-cook had his dinner ready for him, served at a little table in a rear room; the confectioner's daughter prepared his stuffed oysters, found his cigars, and took care of his money. It was owing to his counsel that this young girl never encouraged a lover, although she was decidedly pretty; she lived a steady life and wore the old costume of

the Venetians. This pure-bred Venetian, when Capraja first interested himself in her, was twelve years old; when he died she was six and twenty. Although he never so much as kissed her hand or forehead, she was yet very fond of him; but she had no idea as to his intentions in regard to her. It came that this girl attained as much influence with him as has a mother with her child. She let him know, when he needed clean linen; one day he would arrive minus his shirt, and she would hand him a clean one to don the next morning.

Never did he glance at a woman, either at the theater or when promenading. He was descended from an old patrician family, but never thought his rank added to his dignity. When the night was come, though, after twelve o'clock, he awoke from his apathy and showed by his conversation that he had seen and heard everything that had taken place. This gentle Diogenes, half-Turk, half-Venetian, who was incapable of giving explanation of his theories, was stoutly built, short and fat; he had the sharp nose of a Doge, an eye inquisitive and satirical, and a discreet, smiling mouth. When he died, then it became known that he had lived in a small hut near San Benedetto.

He possessed two millions of francs in the Funds of various countries of Europe, and the interest, which had lain undrawn on the securities since their purchase in 1814, had vastly increased his original capital. The whole of this was left to the confectioner's daughter.

"Genovese," he was remarking, "will work wonders. I don't know whether he really comprehends the grand aim of music or only sings instinctively; but he is the only singer with whom I have been absolutely satisfied. I shall not die without having heard a *cadenza*[1] executed like those I have sometimes heard in my dreams, when I have awakened with a sensation that the sounds were in the air surrounding me. The clear *cadenza* is the acme of art; an arabesque adorning the chief room of the house; too little, it becomes nothing; a shade too much, it becomes confusion.

"The *cadenza* is set to arouse the soul to a thousand sleeping ideas—it ascends, takes its flight through space, scatters seed upon the air to be received in our ears to bloom in the heart. If you believe me, Raphael gave the preference to music of poetry in his painting of Saint-Cecilia. In this he was right; music appeals to the heart, writing is offered to the intellect; its thoughts, like scent, is a direct communication. The voice of the singer does not thrust itself upon the mind, nor yet upon the memory of delights; it stirs sensation, thought's first principle.

"It is a shame that the people compel musicians to add words to their expressions, factitious emotions—though if this be not done it is all unintelligible to the vulgar. So it remains that the *cadenza* is the sole object remaining to the lovers of pure music; those devoted to art unfettered.

"A sorcerer crowned my brow and guided me through the ivory-door by which we gain access to the mysterious dreamland. To Genovese it is due that I was enabled to escape from my old

[1] At that time the *cadenza* was an impromptu finale.—TRANSLATOR.

husk for a few minutes; short minutes, perhaps, by actual count of time, but long when measured by sensation. A short springtime with its perfume of roses, was accorded me when I was again young—and beloved."

"But, see then, *caro* Capraja," said the Duke, "there is in music a yet more magical effect than is found in the *cadenza*."

"What?" asked Capraja.

"The true unison of two voices or of a violin and a human voice—the tone of the former of which most nearly resembles the latter," replied Cataneo.

"On this perfect concord we are borne to life's very heart; we float on the surge of that element which resuscitates rapture, which carries man up into the midst of that luminous sphere whence his soul commands the whole universe. You still require a *thema*, Capraja; but for my part the unalloyed element is sufficient. For you the current must flow through all the myriad channels of the machine, thence to fall in glistening cascades; the pellucid, tranquil pool contents me. My eye looks upon a lake without a ripple. I embrace the infinite."

"Say no more, Cataneo," said Capraja with hauteur. "What! Is it that you fail to see the fairy who swiftly drives through the sparkling air and gathers and binds in harmony's golden thread the gems of melody so smilingly poured upon us?

"Have you then never experienced the touch of her magic wand when she cries to Curiosity: 'Awake!' Up from the depths of our brain a divinity arises all radiant; she lightly touches Memory, fingering it as an organist does his keys; she brings us the roses of past days, divinely kept and still fresh. The mistress of our youth is revivified, she strokes the young man's hair; the heart overfull runs over; the flowery banks are seen laved by the torrent of love. Each burning bush we knew burst forth anew in flame; it repeats the heavenly strain we once heard and understood. The voice rools on; it rapidly embraces those fleeting horizons; they melt away; these vanish and are superseded by newer, more profound joys—a future unrevealed, to which the fairy points as she reascends to the blue empyrean."

"And you," responded Cataneo, "you have never seen the direct ray of a star shining in the vista above; you have never climbed that ray that guides one to the skies, to the very center of that first cause which moves worlds?"

The game which the Duke and Capraja were playing was unknown to their hearers.

"The voice of Genovese thrills every fiber," said Capraja.

"La Tinti's fires the blood," the Duke responded.

"That *cavatina* is a blessed paraphrase of love," Capraja continued. "Ah! Rossini was young when he wrote that interpretation of bubbling ecstasy. My heart was charged with renewed blood, a thousand desires tingled in my veins; never has the fairy waved such beautiful arms, smiled more alluringly; never did she more cunningly lift her tunic to display an ankle as she raised the curtain that conceals my other life!"

"To-morrow, old friend," said Cataneo, "you shall ride on the back of a glistening white swan, who will give you sight of the most lovely country; the spring-

time shall be seen as children see it. You shall repose on silk of crimson, gazed upon by a Madonna; you will feel like a happy lover kissed by a nymph, whose bare feet you will see, but who will presently disappear. Genovese's voice will be that swan, if he is able to combine it with its Leda—Clarina's voice. For to-morrow night *Moses in Egypt* is to be performed—the greatest son of Italy's grandest opera."

The company present, not wishing to be the victims of mysticism, did not take any part in the conversation. The French doctor and Vendramin were the only ones who listened to them for a few minutes. The opium smoker could enter into their imaginative flights; the keys of the mansion were in his possession—the palace through which they wandered. The doctor endeavored to and did understand, for his was a genius of the Pleiades of a Paris medical school, whence evolves, in the case of a true physician, the metaphysician, the expert analyst.

"Do you understand them?" said Emilio to Vendramin, as they emerged from the café at two o'clock in the morning.

"Yes, my dear fellow," said Vendramin, as they wended their way to his house. "Those two men belong to the legion of unearthly spirits to whom it is permitted here below to throw off their fleshly wraps; they can take flight on magic's shoulder to the blue empyrean in which celestial wonders are created by the intellectual life. Their art enables them to soar whither your great love bears you, the whither opium transports me. None can then understand them but those who resemble them. The Duke and Capraja were acquainted in Naples—there Cataneo was born; they are crazy on the subject of music."

"But what about that curious system that Capraja was anxious to explain to Cataneo?" said the Prince. "Can you guess that?"

"Yes," Vendramin replied. "Capraja's great friend is from Cremona. He is a musician and is staying in the Capello palace; he has a theory that sound echoes to an element in man analogous to that producing the phenomenon of light and which creates ideas. In his idea, man has within him keys that are in accord and acted upon by sound; these correspond to his nerve-centers, and thence sensation and ideas take their rise. Capraja looks upon the arts as a collection of effects, which he can harmonize within himself; he takes all external nature, and a further mysterious nature, which he terms the inner life, and compounds them. He embraces all the ideas of this instrument-maker, who is now engaged in composing an opera.

"Try and conceive a sublime creation in which the wonders of the visible universe are reproduced with immeasurable grandeur, with vividness, rapidity, vastness; wherein is an infinity of sensation, whither certain privileged natures may penetrate, then you may form an inadequate idea of the ecstatic bliss which Cataneo and Capraja spoke of; each was a poet for himself alone. It is only in the intellect that so soon as a man rises above the circle of plastic art—a mere imitation—that he enters that sphere of transcendent abstraction where he understands all as an ele-

mentary principle; but that man then becomes unintelligible to ordinary intelligence."

"That is the explanation of my love for Massimilla," said Emilio. "My dear friend, there is in me a power which flames up under the fire of her glance or at her lightest touch, and wafts me into a universe of light where effects are produced that I cannot, dare not reveal. Often it has seemed to me that her delicate skin has impressed flowers upon mine as her hand lay in mine. Her words play on that inner key of which you have spoken. My brain is excited with desire; it stirs that invisible world in place of exciting my apathetic flesh; the atmosphere becomes rosy and sparkling; perfumes, unknown to my outer senses, but of great potency, relax my sinews; roses wreathe around my temples; my inanition becomes so great than I fell as though my life-blood was escaping through an opened artery."

"Smoking opium has the like effect on me," replied Vendramin.

"Do you desire to die, then?" exclaimed Emilio, alarmed.

"With Venice!" said Vendramin, motioning with his hand in the direction of St. Mark's. "Can you perceive a single pinnacle that is erect? Can you not understand that the sea awaits its prey?"

The Prince inclined his head; he could not further speak of love to his friend.

To understand the meaning of a free country you must have traveled in a conquered nation.

When they arrived at the Vendramin palace they noticed a gondola moored at the water-gate. The Prince put his arm around and affectionately embraced Vendramin, and said:

"A good night to you, my dear boy."

"What! a woman? for me; when I only sleep with Venice," cried Vendramin.

At this moment the gondolier, who leaned against a pillar, recognized the man he was looking for; he muttered in Emilio's ear:

"The Duchess, monseigneur."

Emilio sprang into the gondola, when a pair of soft arms dragged him upon the cushions with a force of iron; there he felt the heaving bosom of an ardent woman. He was no longer Emilio; he was Clarina's lover. His thoughts and sensations were so confused that he yielded like one stupefied by her first kiss.

"Forgive the trickery, my love," said the Sicilian. "I shall die if you go not with me."

And the gondola sped over the discreet water.

At half-past seven of the following evening the audiece was again assembled, each in his respective place, in the theater, with the exception of those occupying the parquet, who sat where chance placed them. Old Capraja was in Cataneo's box.

The Duke paid a call to the Duchess previous to the overture; he made it a point to stand behind her and left the front seat next the Duchess to Emilio. He made a few trifling remarks with the politeness of a stranger, and without a tinge of irony or sarcasm. But in spite of every effort he made to appear amiable and at home, the Prince

could not disguise his profoundly anxious expression. A bystander might have given jealousy as the cause for the change in his usually placid countenance.

The Duchess without doubt reciprocated Emilio's feelings; she appeared gloomy and depressed. Between two sulky people the Duke was fidgety, and he took the chance of the French doctor's entrance to slip away.

"Monsieur," said Cataneo to the physician, before letting fall the portière over the box entrance, "to-night you will hear a great musical poem, which is not easy to be understood at a first hearing. In leaving you with the Duchess I am aware that you can have no more competent instructor, for she is a pupil of mine."

The same as the Duke, the doctor was struck by the expression shown on the countenances of the lovers, a look of pining despair.

"Then does an Italian opera need a guide?" he asked of Massimilla, smiling

Her position as the mistress of the box was recalled to her by this question, so the Duchess attempted to disperse the clouds that shadowed her brow; she replied with eager haste, in order to open up a conversation in which she might give vent to her concealed irritation.

"This is more an oratorio than opera, monsieur," said she, "a work not without resemblance to a grand edifice; it will be with pleasure that I act as your guide. Trust me that you cannot give too much of your mind to our great Rossini, for you require to be equally a poet and musician to properly appreciate the whole theme of such a work.

"You pertain to a race whose language and spirit are too practical to receive such music without an effort; but, then, France is too intellectual to not learn how to love it, and cultivate it, and likewise to succeed in that as in everything else that she attempts. It further must be admitted that the music created by Lulli, Rameau, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Cimarosa, Paisiello, and Rossini, and as it will be written by the future geniuses, is a new art, unknown to former generations; they lacked our variety of instruments, they, too, were unaware of the harmony upon which melody's flowers now bloom as in some rich soil.

"A novel art demands the study of the public, that study to be of a sort that develops the feeling to which music makes appeal. This sentiment as yet scarcely exists among you: a nation given over to theories of philosophy, analysis, discussion, and always being torn by civil disturbances. Modern music needs peace, perfect peace, being the language of loving, lofty souls, inclined to a sentiment of emotional aspirations.

"This language, more full by a thousand times than that of words, is to speech what thought becomes in its utterance; sensations are awakened and primitive ideas are born in that portion of us in which such have their conception. One of the greatest truths of music is this power over our inmost being.

"Every other art gives a definite creation to the soul; those of music are indefinite—infinite. The poet's ideas we must needs accept, so also those of the painter's picture, the statue of the sculptor, but in music each interprets to

himself the will of the sorrow, his happiness, his hope, his despair. Now other arts give bounds to our mind by attaching it to a preconceived figure, while music frees it and allows it to roam over all nature, it alone having this power of expansion. You will hear how I interpret Rossini's *Moses*."

She bent over to the Frenchman so that she might be heard only by him.

"Moses is the liberator of a race in slavery!" said she. "Bear this in mind and you will understand the religious hope that the Fenice will show in listening to the prayer of the delivered Hebrews, and with what thunderous applause it will respond."

Emilio sank into a rear seat when the leader lifted his bow. The physician by a nod was notified to take the vacancy. But the Frenchman was more interested in trying to learn what had gone amiss between the two lovers than to enter the domain of music created by the man whom all Italy applauded; for it was the day of the triumph of Rossini in his own land. He watched the Duchess and observed how she was speaking in an enforced, feverish excitement. She recalled to him the dignity in sadness, the physical control that he had so admired in the Niobe at Florence; but yet her soul shone out through the warm blush of her cheek; her eyes seemed to dry away the tears by her scorching fires, though their anxiety was hidden under a cloak of pride. Her controlled grief was soothed, it seemed, when she gazed at Emilio, who never removed his eyes off her; it was readily seen that she was trying to disguise some mute despair. Her feelings, in the state they were, gave an enhanced height to the loftiness of her soul.

As most women who are under the trend of some absorbing agitation, she had somewhat of the Pythoness and acted beyond her usual restrictions—though she was still beautiful and calm. It was the figure of her ideas that was wrung by desperation, and not the features of her face. Perhaps it was that she wished to shine with all her intellect to give charm to life and keep her lover from death.

When the three chords in C-major had been given by the orchestra, there written by the composer to announce the opening of the overture—for the real overture is that great movement which begins with this severe attack and which ends only when the light appears at Moses's command—the Duchess was unable to restrain a little convulsive start, which showed how entirely the music was in accord with her veiled distress.

"Those three chords cause the blood to freeze," said she. "They announce trouble. Hearken carefully to this introduction—the awful lamentations of a nation smitten by the hand of God. What a wail! The King, the Queen, their first-born son, every dignity of the country bewails; they are wounded in their pride, their conquests; they are checked in their avarice. *Dear* Rossini! You did well to fling this bone to the Tedeschi to gnaw, who declared that we possessed neither harmony nor science!

"Now you listen to the sinister melody that has been engrafted on this deep composition of harmony by the *Maestro;* it is more than worthy of comparison with the most technical structures of

the Germans, but without their fatigue and tiresomeness.

"You French will understand when this oratorio is given in your capital, you who carried through such a revolution of bloodshed, this noble dirge of the victims on whom God is avenging his own people. Only an Italian could have written this pregnant, inexhaustible theme—really Dantesque. Is it nothing, think you, to behold such a vision of vengeance even for one instant? Handel, Sebastian Bach, all the old German masters, your grand Beethoven even, down on your knees! Here is the queen of arts—Italy is triumphant."

The Duchess had thus spoken while the curtain was being raised. Now the physician heard the sublime symphony introducing the great Biblical drama. It is written to express a nation's sufferings. In its expression suffering is universal, so especially physical suffering. Thus the man of genius, as he was, felt that there must be no variety of ideas, the musician had hit on the leading theme, he worked it out in various keys, he grouped the choruses and the *dramatis personæ* to bring out the theme through resolutions and cadences of wonderful structure. The power is found in its simplicity.

"There is something that is relentless in that slow phrase; it is cold and weird: it resembles an iron bar, wielded by some executioner of Heaven, as it drops in regular rhythem on the limbs of its victims.

"As we hear it passing from C-minor into G-minor, returning to C and thence to the dominant, G, whence it starts anew, and *fortissimo* on the tonic, B-flat, resolving into F-major and returning to C-minor; in each key, more than ever terrible; chilly, somber, we are forced as a finality to enter into the impression that the composer intends."

As a fact, the Frenchman was profoundly moved when this combined grief exploded in the cry:

"O Nume d'Israel,
Se brami in libertà
Il popol tuo fedel,
Di lui di noi pietà!"

(O Lord of Israel,
If Thou wouldst see in liberty
Thy faithful people,
Deign to have pity upon them and us.)

"There could never be a greater synthesis made up of natural effects; nature could not give a grander idealization.

"In a great national disaster for a long time each one laments for himself only, but soon, from out the crowd, there and here arises a more emphatic exclamation of anguish, until at length, when all have experienced the falling misery, it bursts out like a storm. When all can perceive the universal trouble, then the low murmurs of the people change to impatient cries. Thus Rossini has proceded.

"After the outburst in C-major comes Pharaoh, who sings his grand *recitative, 'Mano ultrice di un Dio'* (God's avenging hand); the original theme is here repeated with more signal expression; now all Egypt begs help from Moses."

Taking advantage of the pause necessary for the entrance of Moses and Aaron, the Duchess gave this great introduction the interpretation:

"What, they weep!" she added passionately. "They have done much evil.

Egyptians, expiate your sins; expiate those of your insensate Court! What wonderful skill the painter has displayed in making use of every somber tone in music, of all that is gloomiest on the palette of music! What clinging darkness! What mists! Does not your very soul mourn? Is not the blackness of the land palpable to you? Can you not feel that all nature is wrapped in darkest shadow? Here are no palms, no palaces of Egypt, there is no landscape. And think what balm to your mind will be in the profound religious strain of the celestial physician who will stop this cruel plague! With what skill is everything done to bring the finish of that glorious invocation of Moses to God.

"By a scientific lucubration which Capraja could explain this prayer to Heaven is only accompanied by the brass; this is what gives the solemnity of its religious features.

"Not only is this plan noble in its position, but notice the fertility of genius in its resources; Rossini acquires fresh beauty from the very obstacle he has erected. He keeps the strings in reserve to display the daylight when darkness is succeeded by it; in doing this he has achieved one of the grandest effects ever found in music. Such a result had never previously been known, until this inimitable genius led the way, to be obtained by a simple *recitative.* Thus far we have had neither an *aria* or duet. The poet relied only on the force of the idea, the vivid imagery, the realism of the declamation. This scene of despair, the darkness that can be felt, those cries of anguish; the musical picture in all is as fine as the *Deluge* by your great Poussin."

Moses waved his staff and it was light.

"Monsieur, does not the music here vie with the sun, whose radiance it has borrowed; with nature, whose phenomena it gives in every detail?" the Duchess continued, in a low voice.

"Here art reaches its acme; beyond this can no musician go. Can you not hear Egypt awaking after its long somnolence? Joy comes with the day. In what work, ancient or modern, can you find so grand a phrase? The highest gladness contrasted with profoundest woe! What exclamations! What joyful tones! Now the oppressed minds breathe again. What delirium in that orchestral *tremolo!* What a fine *tutti!* that is a delivered people rejoicing. Are you not thrilled with joy?"

The physician, who was startled by the contrast, clapped his hands; he was truly carried away by his enthusiasm for one of the grandest compositions of modern music.

"Bravo, la Doni!" said Vendramin, who had heard the Duchess.

"Now that the overture is ended, you have gone through a great sensation," cried the Duchess, turning to the Frenchman. "Your heart beats; down in your imagination you behold a lovely sunrise; it floods a whole continent with light that before was cold and dark. Would you learn the method employed by the musician, that to-morrow you may admire him for the secrets of his handicraft after the enjoying of his works to-night? What, think you, causes that effect of daylight—so sudden, so mystical, yet so complete? It consists of the simple chord of C, many

times reiterated, and only varied by its fourth and sixth. This reveals his magic touch.

"The morning of imagery is really and absolutely the same as the natural dawn; for light is one and the same in everything, ever alike in itself—its effects only vary with the thing on which it falls.

"Is it not so?

"Well, then, the musician has chosen as his fundamental bass, for its sole *Motif*, a simple chord in C. The sun first sheds light upon the mountain heights, and afterward in the valleys. So the chord is first heard in the treble of the violins in Northern lightness; it spreads through the orchestra; one by one it awakens the instruments; it courses among them. Just as light glides from one object to the next, giving color as it goes, so does the music, and calls forth each rill of harmony till they join in the current of the *tutti*.

"Up to this the violins are silent, but now they give the signal with their light *tremolo*, slightly *agitato*, like the dawn's first rays. That bright, lively movement caresses the soul, and is skillfully supported by bass chords, as well as by a vagu fanfare of the trumpets, confined to their lower notes; thus giving a vivd reality of the last cool shadows lingering in the valleys while the earlier warm rays tinge the peaks.

"Now the wind is gradually added to support the harmony. The voices join in with delightful sighs of surprise. At length flares out the brass, the trumpets sound; light, the source of all harmony, bathes all nature; every resource of music is brought out with turbulence—it is the splendor of the Eastern sun. Even the triangle, with its ever-recurring C, calls to our minds the shrill note, the joyous rhythm of early risen birds.

"The same key newly handled by the master thus expresses nature's every joy, the while it soothes the sorrow it had uttered before.

"There is the sterling-mark of real genius—Unity. It is the same: it is different. In the one same phrase we can trace a thousand varied woes, the despair of a whole people. In the one same chord we experience the various trifles of awakening nature—each expression of a nation's joy. These two tremendous themes are joined together as one by that prayer to an ever-living God, the maker of all things, the author alike of that joy and woe.

"Now, is not the introduction alone a grand poem?"

"It is, indeed," said the Frenchman.

"Next comes a quintet as Rossini only can give us. If ever he was justified in giving vent to that light, mellow, flowery grace for which the Italian music is often blamed, is it not in this graceful movement by which each one expresses gladness? The people who were enslaved are now delivered, and yet a passion in danger must needs make moan. The son of Pharaoh loves a Jewess, but this Jewess must leave him.

"The thing that gives the ravishing grace to this quintet is a return to love's homelier feelings, after the great pictures of two immense national emotions—general misery, universal joy, given forth with the magic force impressed upon them by Divine vengeance, and with the miraculous inspiration of the Bible.

Now was I not right?" added Massimilla, as the fine *stretto* finished:

"Voci di giubilo,
D' in'orno eccheggino,
Di pace l' Iride
Per noi spunto."

(Sound around us
The cries of joy,
While o'er us dawns
The rainbow of peace.)

"With what deep skill has the composer constructed this phrase!" she continued, after awaiting a reply. "He commences with a horn solo, divinely sweet, accompanied by *arpeggios* on the harps; for the first voices we shall hear in this great piece of concerted music are those of Moses and Aaron returning thanks to the true God. The strain reverts to the sublimity of the invocation; it is soft and simple and blends, notwithstanding, with the joys of the heathen.

"This transition combines the celestial and terrestrial in such a manner as could only have been the device of genius; it gives a tinge of color to the quintet *en ardante* that I can only liken it to the glow shown by Titian on his Divine Persons. Did you notice the exquisite weft of the voices? the skillful débuts by which the composer has gathered them about the theme given sound by the orchestra? the scientific progressions which make us ready to grasp the festal *allegro*? Did not you obtain a glance, as one might say, of dancing ones, the dazzling whirl of a whole people rescued from bondage? When the clarionet gives the signal for the *stretto—'Voci di giubilo'*—so bright, so gay, your soul was it not then filled with the sacred fiery joy such as King David in the Psalms speaks of, when he ascribes it to the hills?"

"Yes, it would make a right pretty dance-tune," said the physician.

"French! French! always French!" exclaimed the Duchess, stopped in her exultation by this keen thrust. "Yes; undoubtedly you would be capable of taking that marvelous outpouring of grand and dainty rejoicing and turning it into a rigadoon. Sublime poetry cannot find mercy in your eyes. The loftiest genius—saints, kings, disasters—everything the most holy must bend beneath the chastisement of your caricatures. And the making vulgar of noble music by converting it into a dance-tune is caricaturing it. With you, wit kills soul as argument slays reason."

During the *recitative* of Osiride and Membrea they all sat in silence. These plot to annul the order issued by Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go.

"Have I given you vexation?" asked the physician of the Duchess. "I shall be in despair. Your words are like a magic wand; they unlock the pigeonholes of my brain; they kindle new ideas, let loose by this sublime music."

"No," she answered, "you have applauded our great composer in your own way. With you, Rossini will be a success by his wit and sensual gifts. It may be, let us hope it, that he will find a few noble souls, in love with the ideal, to properly appreciate the sublime, the height of his music. Ah, now we have the famous duet between Elcia and Osiride!" she cried, and she continued, during the respite caused by three salvos of applause which hailed La Tinti, who just now made her first appearance on the stage:

"If it should be that La Tinti clearly understands the part of Elcia, you will

hear the frenzied wail of a woman torn by her love for her race, and that of love for one of her people's oppressors, the while Osiride, filled with mad adoration for his lovely vassal, tries to detain her. The work is constructed as much on this idea as on that of Pharaoh's resistance to God and liberty; this must be thoroughly entered into or you cannot comprehend this stupendous opera. What can be more dramatic than the Prince's love for this Jewess; it almost justifies treason to the power of the oppressor.

"Here, then, is what is expressed by this bold and marvelous poem in music; each nation has been stamped by Rossini with a fantastic individuality, for they are attributed with a historic grandeur subscribed to by every imagination. The songs of the Hebrews, their trust in God, are ever in contrast with the shrieks of rage of Pharaoh and his futile efforts, as represented by this powerful hand.

"At this moment Osiride thinks only of love; he hopes to detain his mistress by the reminiscences of their pleasures as lovers; he tries to conquer the feeling for her people. Here, then, we find delicious languor, a glowing sweetness, voluptuous suggestiveness; Oriental love displayed in the *aria 'Ah! se puoi cosi lasciarmi'* (If you have courage to leave me, you will break my heart), sung by Osiride; and *'Ma perchè cosi straziarmi?'* Elcia's reply. No; two hearts in such a melodious unison could never part," she went on, turning to look at the Prince.

"But now the lovers are suddenly interrupted by the exultant voices of the Hebrews as they journey in the distance; this recalls Elcia. Hear what a delightfully inspiriting *allegro* is in the theme of this march as they start for the desert. None, save Rossini, can cause reed and brass to express so much. And is not the art that can best express 'my native land' truly nearer heaven than the others? That clarion-call moves me each time so profoundly that I cannot find words to let you know how cruel it is to an enslaved people to see those freed ones march away!"

The eyes of the Duchess were filled with tears; she listened thus to the grand *motif* which really is the masterpice of the opera.

"*'Dov' è mai quel core amante'*" (What heart that loves but will partake my anguish), she murmured in Italian as La Tinti commenced the lovely *aria* of the *stretto* in which she implores pity for her sorrow. "But, say, what has happened? The parquet is in a turmoil——"

"Genovese is bellowing like a stag," replied the Prince.

As a matter of fact, this duet, the first with La Tinti, was utterly spoiled by Genovese's complete breakdown. His so excellent method, rivaling that of Crescentini and Veluti, appeared to have completely deserted him. A *sostenuto* in the wrong place, an embellishment carried to excess, spoiled the effect; for a strident climax—forte—without a due *crescendo,* the sound of an outpouring of water tumbling through a suddenly opened sluice-gate, showed a willful neglect of all the canons of good taste.

The parquet was in the greatest excitement. The Venetian populace believed there was a deliberate plot between Genovese and his friends; La Tinti was recalled and received frenzied applause, while Genovese had a hint or so which warned him of the hostile feelings of the audience. During this scene, so highly amusing to a French

man, La Tinti was had to the front eleven times to receive alone the plaudits of the house, Genovese, all but hissed, not daring to offer her his hand—the doctor made a remark to the Duchess about the *stretto* of the duet.

"Rossini, in this place," said he, "ought to have expressed the direst sorrow; on the contrary, I discover an airy movement, a sense of ill-timed cheerfulness."

"You are right," said she. "This error results from a tyrannical custom which all composers must obey. It was his prima donna he was thinking the most of, not of Elcia, when he wrote that *stretto*. But this evening I could throw myself into the situation so fully that, even if La Tinti had been more than usually brilliant, the passage, lively as it is, would have been to me full of melancholy."

The physician looked attentively from the Prince to the Duchess, but was unable to guess at the reason that held them apart; that which made the duet seem so heart-rending.

"Here comes a splendid theme, Pharaoh scheming against the Hebrews. The grand *aria, 'A rispettarmi apprenda,'* is a triumph for Carthagenova, who will express in superb phrasing the offended pride and the King's duplicity. The Throne will speak: He withdraws the concession he had made, he arms himself with anger.

"Pharaoh rises to his feet to grasp the prey that is escaping! Rossini has never written anything grander in style; or aught stamped with more irresistible, living energy. It is a finished work, grandly supported by an accompaniment of marvelous instrumentation; but so indeed is every portion of this opera. Youth's vigor illumines the least detail."

The whole house rose to applaud this fine movement, which was thoroughly appreciated by the Venetians, as being so magnificently interpreted by the singer.

"In the *finale,*" said the Duchess, "you hear a repetition of the march, this is expressive of the joy of deliverance and of faith in God, who allows His people to rush off gladly to wander in the desert! Whose lungs but would be refreshed by the aspirations of a whole race released from slavery?

"O ye loving, living melodies! Glory to the grand genius who has known how to utter such noble thoughts! That march is the essence of war, it proclaims that the God of armies is on the side of this nation.

"How filled are those strains of thanksgiving with deep feeling. The imagery of the Bible has arisen in our minds; this most glorious musical *scena* enables us to realize one of the most stupendous dramas of that solemn, ancient world. The religious tone given in some of the voice parts, the manner of their entrance, one by one, to form a group with each other and the rest—give expression to all we have or ever can imagine of the sacred mysteries of that early age of manhood.

"And yet this finely concerted piece is only a development of the theme of the march into all its musical outcome. That theme is the inspiring element, alike of the orchestra and voices, the *aria,* the brilliant orchestration which supports it.

"Elcia now joins the crowd; here, to give shade to the joyful spirit of his number, Rossini causes her to utter her regrets. Hearken to her *duettino* with Amenofi; did ever blighted love express itself in sweeter song? The grace of a *notturno* fills it with the secret grief of

a hopeless love. It is sad, sad! The desert will indeed be to her a desert!

"Afterward comes the fierce conflict between the Egyptians and Hebrews. All their joy is dashed, their march is stopped by the Egyptians. Pharaoh's edict is proclaimed in a phrase hollow and drear, the leading *motif* of the *finale;* in fancy we hear the tramp of that great Egyptian army as it surrounds the sacred phalanx of the true God, curling about it as a huge African serpent envelops its prey. But note the beauty of the lament of the duped and disappointed Hebrews! It is, though, less Hebrew than Italian. A superb phrase presages Pharaoh's arrival, his presence brings face to face the leaders and all the moving passions of the drama. The conflict of sentiments in that sublime *stretto* is admirable, that in which the wrath of Moses meets that of the two Pharaohs. What a medley of voices, what unchained fury!

"No subject with equal grandeur was ever conceived by a composer. That famous *finale* of *Don Giovanni* at best only shows us the libertine at outs with his victims who implore Heaven's vengeance; but here the world's dominions seek to defeat God. Here are two nations face to face; and Rossini has made marvelous use of the every means he has at command. He succeeds in giving the uproar of a tremendous storm which forms, as it were, the background to most horrible imprecations; yet he does not make it absurd. It is achieved by using chords in triple time and oft repeated; it molds a rhythm of somber musical emphasis grand in its monotony, so persistently repeated as to become absolutely overpowering. The Egyptians' terror at the pillar of fire and the cries for vengeance of the Hebrews require a delicate manipulation of harmony in the masses; see then how he makes the progression of the instrumentation follow the fugue of the chorus. In the midst of that deluge of fire the *allegro assai* in C-minor is terrific.

"You must needs confess," said Massimilla, at the time when Moses brings down the rain of fire by lifting his rod, where the musician brings out the full power of the orchestra and that of the stage, "that never did music more completely express so full an idea of distress and confusion."

"Which has spread to the parquet," said the Frenchman.

"What now? Most certainly the parquet is in a state of tremendous excitement," said the Duchess.

In the *finale,* Genovese, who had fixed his eyes on La Tinti, gesticulated with such ridiculous flourishes that the parquet became suddenly enraged at having their enjoyment thus interrupted. To Italian ears nothing is so exasperating as a contrast between good and bad singing. The manager appeared on the stage to inform the house that Genovese, in answer to his remarks to him, had said that he was unaware in what manner he had given offense to the public, as at this same instant he had tried his utmost to reach the acme of perfection of his art.

"Let him be as bad to-day as he was yesterday—that would be good enough for us!" roared out Capraja in fury.

This exclamation restored good humor to the house.

The ballet, contrary to the usual Italian style, attracted but little atten-

tion. The subject of Genovese's strange acting and the manager's unhappy speech formed the text of conversation in every box. Those having the *entre* behind the scenes at once left the auditorium to learn the mystery of this curious performance. Soon it became rumored about that La Tinti had caused a terrible scene with Genovese, her colleague, and had accused the tenor of being insanely jealous of her success; that he had tried to prevent it by his preposterous behavior, and had actually endeavored to spoil the performance by pretending a passionate devotion to her. The prima donna was weeping bitterly over the catastrophe. She said she had been trying to fascinate her lover, who was somewhere in the house, though she had not been able to locate him.

Unless one understands the peaceful, humdrum round of daily life in the Venice of to-day, so lacking in incident that the altercation between two lovers, or, it may be, the huskiness of the voice of a singer, becomes the note of conversation, it becomes impossible to realize the excitement in the theater and at the Café Florian, for it took on as much importance as the discussion of politics does in England. La Tinti was in love! La Tinti had been hampered in her performance! Genovese was either crazy or malignant of set purpose—he was actuated by the artist's jealousy so well known and familiar to Italians. Here was a mine to be worked by eager discussion.

The parquet was in a ferment of talk such as that on the Bourse; such a turmoil could not fail to astound a Frenchman accustomed to the quietude of the theaters in Paris. The boxes were in a ferment like the buzz of swarming bees.

One man alone remained pensive in the hubbub. Emilio Memmi, his eyes fixed on Massimilla, his back turned to the stage, seemed, in his melancholy expression, to live on her look; not once had he glanced at the prima donna.

"I need not ask, *caro carino,*" said Vendramin to Emilio, "what result my negotiations had. Your pure, saintly Massimilla has been supremely kind; she has been, in fact, La Tinti."

The Prince made reply by a negative shake of his head, full of profound sadness.

"Your love, then, has not yet descended from the spaces in ether in which you soar," said Vendramin, who was under the excitation of opium. "Not yet has it materialized. This morning, the same as for six months past, you could feel flowers opening their perfumed petals under the dome of your skull, which was an expanse grand in proportions. Your whole blood rushed to your throbbing heart, that seemed to rise to choke your throat. There—in there," said he, lightly touching Emilio's breast, "you experienced rapturous feelings. Massimilla's voice thrilled in your soul like waves of rippling light; her touch gave freedom to a thousand captive joys: they sprang from the convolutions of your brain and gathered around you in clouds, they bore your etherealized being through the blue air in a blaze of purple to far beyond the snowy peaks, to where the pure love of angels abides.

"Her smile, the kisses of her lips, tore off that venomous vestment and consumed the last remaining traces of your earthly nature. Her eyes, twin stars, changed you into a light without

shadow. Together you kneeled down on heaven's palm-branches, there awaiting the opening of the gates of paradise; but they swung heavy on their hinges; you became impatient, you struck at them, but you could not reach them. Your hand could only touch clouds which were more elusive than your desires. Your companion, radiant and adorned with white roses, as a bride of heaven, wept at your anguish. It may have been that she was saying, in soft melodious tones, sweet litanies to the Virgin, the while the devilish cravings of the flesh were tormenting you with their indecent howlings: you have disdained the heavenly fruits of my ecstasy which is shortening my life, but in which I live."

"Your exaltations, my dear Vendramin," answered Emilio, calmly, "are much below reality. Who can in any way describe that absolute physical exhaustion in which we, who abuse the dreams of pleasure, are left; which leaves in the soul an eternal longing, but the spirit in complete possession of its faculties? But this torment of Tantalus's I am weary of; to-night is my last on earth. After one other last attempt, our Mother shall again possess her child—my last sigh shall be received by the Adriatic——"

"Are you crazy?" exclaimed Vandramin. "No, you are mad; for the crisis we despise is madness; it is the remembrance of a former existence reacting on our being of the present. I have been taught that by the good fairies of my dreams, that and much beside!

"You would have one being made of the Duchess and La Tinti; do not this, dear Emilio; take each separately, it is the wiser course. Only Raphael could unite form and idea. You would be the Raphael of love, but chance does not obey orders. Raphael was a *coup,* a lucky-stroke, of God's creation. It was preordained by Him that form and the ideal should be in antagonism; if it were otherwise naught could exist. If the first cause possesses more energy than the result, nothing can come of it. We must live either on the earth or in the heavens. Stay in heaven, it will always be too soon to descend to earth."

"I will accompany the Duchess home," said the Prince. "I shall make one final attempt—afterward."

"Afterward!" exclaimed Vendramin, anxiously. "Promise to call for me at Florian's."

"I will."

This dialogue had been held in modern Greek, a language unfamiliar to the Duchess, although Emilio and Vendramin, like most Venetians, spoke it perfectly. And also to the Frenchman, who, quite without the little circle consisting of the Duchess, Emilio, and Vendramin, yet had a glimmering of the truth, for he interpreted aright these Italian glances, by turns sly or keen, veiled or sidelong, which accompanied their speech. The Duchess had urged Vendramin, by an earnest entreaty, to suggest this to Emilio, for she also suspected her lover's misery which he endured in that frigid empyrean in which he wandered—but she had no suspicions of La Tinti.

"These two young men are mad," said the physician.

"As regards the Prince," said the Duchess, "trust me to cure him. But for Vendramin, he must be wholly in-

curable if he cannot comprehend this divine music."

"If you would let me know the cause of their madness I could cure both," said the Frenchman.

"And since when have great physicians ceased to read the minds of men?" said she, ironically.

The ballet had now been ended for some time; the second act of *Moses* was about to begin. The parquet was quite at attention. It was rumored about that the Duke Cataneo had given Genovese a lecturing; that he had represented to him the injury he was working Clarina, the *diva* of the day. The second act would be superb.

"The Egyptian Prince and his father are on the stage," said the Duchess. "They have yielded again, and, though they are insulting the Hebrews, they tremble with rage. The son is congratulated by his father on his approaching marriage; his son is in despair at this fresh obstacle, but it only adds new fervor to his love which is opposed by everything. Genovese and Carthagenova are singing admirably. You note that the tenor is making peace with the house. How he brings out the beauty of the music! The theme of the son on the tonic, repeated by the father in the dominant, is truly in accord with that simple, serious plan which pervades the whole score; its soberness makes the endless variation of the music still more marvelous. All Egypt is there.

"In all modern music I do not think there exists a composition more truly noble. The majestic solemnity of a king is fully expressed in that wonderful theme; it is in harmony with that grand style which stamps the opera all through. That idea of a son of Pharaoh pouring out his griefs on the bosom of his father, surely could not be so admirably represented as in this noble imagery. For yourself, do you not feel a knowledge of that splendor we are accustomed to ascribe to that monarch of antiquity?"

"Indeed it is sublime music," said the Frenchman.

"The *aria* which the Queen will now sing, *'Pace mia smarrita,'* belongs to those *bravura* airs which must be introduced by every composer, though they detract from the general scheme of the opera; but unless the prima donna be duly flattered, an opera would more like than not never see the light. Still this musical *sop* is so fine itself that on every page it is given as it is written; it is so remarkably brilliant that the leading lady dare not substitute her favorite show-piece, such as is often done in operas.

"But now comes the really most striking movement of the score: the duet between Osiride and Elcia in the subterranean chamber, whither he has concealed her to withhold her from the departing Israelites and whence he intends to fly Egypt with her himself. But Aaron intrudes upon the lovers, he has been to warn Amatthea, and here we have the greatest of all quartettes—*'Mi manca la voce, mi sento morire.'* This *'Mi manca la voce'* is a masterpiece that will survive time itself—that destroyer of fashion in music—for it speaks the language of the soul which can never change. Mozart in his famous *finale* to *Don Giovanni* holds his own; Marcello does the same by his psalm, *'Cœli en arrant gloriam Dei'*; Cimarosa by his *aria, 'Pria che spunti'*: Beethoven by

his symphony in C-minor; Pergolesi by his *'Stabat Mater'*; Rossini will live in his *'Mi manca la voce.'*

"The thing most to be admired in Rossini is his command of the variety in construction; he has here had recourse to the old construction of the canon in unison to produce the required effect; he brings in the voices and they become blended in the same melody. As the style of the lovely melodies was new he set them in ancient framing; to give still more relief he silences the orchestra, and the voices he accompanies by the harps alone. It were impossible to display a greater ingenuity of detail or to produce a greater general effect. Oh, dear! another disturbance!" said the Duchess.

Genovese, now that La Tinti was again on the stage, was but a caricature of himself, although he had sung excellently in his duet with Carthagenova. He had sunk from the great singer to the most wretched chorus singer.

Now arose the most formidable uproar that had ever echoed to the roof of the Fenice. It was only subdued in response to the demand of Clarina; she, rendered furious at the difficulties caused by the stubbornness of Genovese, sang *"Mi manca la voce"* as it can never again be sung. The enthusiasm was tremendous; the house forgot its indignation and rage in absolute, acute enjoyment.

"She drowns my soul in purple radiance!" said Capraja, as he waved his handkerchief in a blessing to *La Diva* Tinti.

"Heaven shower all its blessings on your head," cried out a gondolier.

"Pharaoh," said the Duchess, "will now revoke his commands." (The parquet had become calm again.) "He will be overwhelmed by Moses even while upon his throne, who will declare to him that every first-born son in Egypt shall taste death; he sings out that strain of vengeance which proclaims thunders from heaven, while the clarion notes of the Hebrews are heard above it. You must clearly understand though that this *aria* is by Pacini, it is introduced by Carthagenova in the place of that written by Rossini. Doubtless that *aria, 'Paventa,'* will retain its place in the score; the chance it gives the basso of displaying his voice is too good to be lost, and here expression instead of science carries the day. But, anyway, the *aria* is filled with grand menace, and it is possible that not for long we may be allowed the privilege of hearing it."

A thunderous clapping and cries of bravo hailed the song, followed by a deep, thinking silence; it was thoroughly Venetian and significant; nothing could have been more so, this turmoil and its sudden suppression.

"It is unnecessary to speak of the coronation march which announces the enthroning of Osiride, which is intended as a challenge to Moses, it only needs hearing to be comprehended. The celebrated Beethoven has never written anything finer. This march, filled as it is with earthly pomp, is in marked contrast to that of the Israelites. By comparing them you will see the purpose of the music.

"Elcia declares her love in the presence of the two leaders of the Hebrews; she then renounces it in the exquisite *aria 'Porge la destra amata'* (Give to another the hand your adored one loves). Ah! what anguish! Just look at the house!"

The parquet was shouting *bravos*, as Genovese left the stage.

"Now freed from her deplored lover, we hear La Tinti sing: *'O desolata Elcia'* —that overpowering *cavatina* which is so expressive of love disapproved by God."

"Where art thou, Rossini?" cried Cataneo. "Would that he could hear the music invented by his genius so superbly rendered," he continued. "Is not Clarina worthy of him?" he asked Capraja. "To be able to give light to those notes by such flashes of flame which, starting from the lungs, feed on some unknown matter in the air, which are taken in by our ears and which bear us upward, onward in a heavenly rapture of love, she must be God!"

"She resembles that gorgeous Indian plant, which, deserting earth, absorbs invisible nutriment from the atmosphere, its spiral blossoms of white shed such fragrant vapors that fill the brain with ravishing dreams," replied Capraja.

When she was recalled, La Tinti appeared alone; a storm of applause greeted her; thousands of kisses were blown from as many finger-tips; she was pelted with roses; a wreath was even made of the flowers ravished from the ladies' hats—nearly all of which came from Paris.

The *cavatina* was encored.

"With what eagerness must Capraja have looked forward for this *aria*, in his passion for embellishments, which derives its whole success from the manner of its execution," said Massimilla. "Rossini has, one may say, given over the reins to the fancy of the singer. Here *cadenza* and expression mean everything; with a poor voice, or a feeble interpretation, it would be worthless—the throat alone is responsible for this *aria's* effects. The singer must display the intensest anguish, the anguish of a woman who beholds her lover dying before her eyes.

"La Tinti makes the roof resound with her *alt* notes; here Rossini, leaving the singer free to do her utmost, writes it in the simplest, clearest style. Then for a crowning effect he composes those heart-rending cries: *'Tormenti! Affanni! Smanie!'* What grief, what pain is in those runs. And, you see, La Tinti has brought down the house."

Bewildered by this worshiping adoration of a vast theater for the source of its pleasures, the Frenchman had a glimpse at the real Italian nature. But neither the Duchess nor the two young men paid the least attention to this ovation.

Clarina again began.

The Duchess had a fear that this was the last time she would ever behold Emilio. As for the Prince, he was in the presence of the divinity who uplifted him to the heavens; he had no knowledge of where he was; he heard no longer the voice of the woman who had initiated him into the mysterious sensuality of earthly pleasures, for a profound dejection caused a tingling in his ears; he heard a chorus of plaintive voices which seemed partly drowned in a tempest of pouring rain.

As to Vendramin, he saw himself in a costume of ancient Venice, gazing down upon the ceremony of the *Bucentaure*. The Frenchman very plainly perceived that some painful mystery had arisen between the Duchess and Emilio, and he was racking his brain in the conjecture as to what it might be.

The scene had changed.

In the center of a fine picture, which depicted the Desert and the Red Sea, the Egyptians and Hebrews made their evolutions, but without producing any effect on the four persons occupying the box of the Duchess. But when the first chords of the harps gave the prelude to the hymn of the delivered Israelites, the Prince and Vendramin rose and stood leaning against the opposite sides of the box, while the Duchess supported her head on her hand, resting her elbow on the velvet ledge.

Comprehending from this little stir the importance of this justly famous chorus, the Frenchman listened, as did all the house, with undivided attention.

With one accord the audience shouted for an encore.

"I feel as if I were celebrating Italy's liberation," thought a Milanese.

"Music, such as this, lifts up heads that are bowed; it revives the hope of the most indifferent," said one from Romagna.

"In this scene," said Massimilla, whose emotion was discernible, "science is put aside. This masterpiece was dictated by inspiration alone; it emanated from the soul of the composer like a cry of love! The accompaniment consists solely of harps—only at the last refrain of this divine theme does the orchestra appear. Never can Rossini rise higher than in this prayer; he will do, undoubtedly, work quite as good, he can never excel it; the sublime always equals itself; but this hymn is one of those things that will remain sublime forever. The only companion for such a conception may be found in Marcello's grand psalms, that noble Venetian, who was to music what Giotto was to painting. The majesty of the theme is only to be compared with the noblest inventions ever created by religious writers, as it unfolds itself in episodes of inexhaustible melody.

"How simple the structure! The attack is opened by Moses in G-minor, which ends in a *cadenza* in B-flat, thus allowing the entrance of the chorus, at first *pianissimo,* in the same key of B-flat, resolving itself into G-minor. Three times does this splendid treatment of the voices recur, and it ends its last strophe in a *stretto* in G-major of a most overpowering and majestic effect. It is a nation released from slavery; we feel it in this hymn, as it rises toward heaven, where it is met by the like strains falling from the higher spheres. With joy the stars make response to this ecstasy of a liberated earth. The rhythm in its rounded fullness, the deliberate dignity of the modulations which lead up to the outburst of praise and thanksgiving, its measured return, cause pictures of celestial joys in the soul. Can you not imagine that you see the heavens open; that you there behold angels swinging sistrums of gold, seraphims prostrated, waving their fragrant censers; the archangels resting upon their flaming swords with which they have vanquished the heathen?

"The secret of this music in its refreshing effect on the soul is that of but few works of human genius, I think; for the time it bears us into the infinite; it is within us; we see it in those melodies as boundless as those hymns sung round the throne of God. Rossini's genius carries us to prodigious heights, whence we gaze down upon our promised land; our eyes are fascinated by the

divine light, and we gaze enraptured into limitless space. The last strain of Elcia brings a feeling, as it were, of earth-born passion, for she has nearly recovered from her sorrow, with this psalm of thanksgiving. This, see you, is another touch of genius.

"Aye, sing," cried the Duchess, as she listened to the last stanza with a somber enthusiasm like that given to it by the singers. "Sing! You are free!"

The words were spoken in such a tone of voice as made the physician start. With the intention of diverting Massimilla from her bitter reflections, he engaged her in argument in which the French excel, at the time that a furore of excitement recalling La Tinti was at its highest.

"Madame," said he, "to-morrow I shall come again with a more comprehensive understanding of this great work, thanks to you for your explanation, in its structural effects; you have often mentioned the color of the music; now, as an analyst and materialist, I must acknowledge that I have always rejected the affectation of a number of enthusiasts, who would have us believe that music is painting with tones. It would be, would it not? the same as Raphael's admirers speaking of him as singing in colors."

"In the language of musicians," answered the Duchess, "painting awakens our souls to certain associations or definite images in our minds; now these memories and forms have each their respective colors—sad or lively. You do but fight for a word, that is all. Capraja's theory is that each instrument has its task, its mission; that it appeals to a particular feeling, the same as each color is allied to a certain idea in our souls. Take a pattern in gold on a ground of blue, does that arouse the same sensation in you as a red pattern on green or black? So in music there are no forms, no expressions of emotion —these are simply artistic; but no one gazes on them with indifference. Again, does not the oboe possess that peculiar tone always associated by us with the open country, the same it has in common with most wind instruments? The brass gives a suggestion of martial ideas, it arouses violent and, at times, even a furious feeling. The strings, which derive their material from the organic world, appeal to the finest fibers of our being—they reach the heart's depths.

"In speaking as I did of the somber hue, the coldness of tone in the introduction to *Moses,* I was, it seems to me, quite as justified as your critics are when they allude to 'color' in a writer's work. You confess to a nervous style, a pallid style, a gay or bright-colored style, do you not? Art can paint with words, sound, color, lines, shape. The means are manifold, the result one.

"An Italian architect could give us the same feeling by constructing an esplanade through, between and under, gloomy, damp glades of tall, thick trees from whence we emerge suddenly upon a valley filled with streams, flowers, and mills, all radiant in the sunshine, as that created in us by the overture to *Moses in Egypt.*

"At their greatest the arts are but an exposition of nature's grand scenery.

"Go and talk with Capraja, you will be astonished at what he will teach you; for myself, I am not learned enough to propound the philosophy of music.

He can inform you how every instrument that depends on the touch of man for its expression and temperament of tone is superior to color as a means of expression, which must needs remain fixed, or speech which has its limits. The language of music is infinite: it includes all, it expresses everything. Can you now see in what lies the pre-eminence of the work to which you have just listened?

"I can explain it in a few words. Music is of two kinds: one petty, poor, second-rate, never varying, its base the hundred or so phrasings which all musicians understand, a babbling which is more or less pleasant, the life that most composers live. As we hear their would-be melodies, their themes, which gave much or little satisfaction, and of which not a trace is left in our minds, we know that by a century's end they are entirely forgotten.

"But nations have preserved from time's birth until our own day certain phrases which they have guarded as sacred treasures; these have contained an epitome of their manners and instincts; they embrace, I might say, their history. Hark to one of those primitive strains—take the Gregorian chant as an example; it is, in sacred song, the heritage of the remotest races; in it you will lose yourself in deep dreams. Despite the severe simplicity of the rudimentary relics, strange, but portentous, conceptions will unfold before you. Once or twice in a century, never more frequent, a Homer of music arises; he is granted by God the guerdon of being ahead of his age. These men can concert melodies full to overflowing of facts accomplished, pregnant by massive poetry. Remember this, think of it. The thought, a germ, often turned over, will prove fruitful; melody, not harmony, it is that will weather the attack of time.

"The music in this oratorio is filled with a world of grand and holy things. An opera with that introduction and ending with that invocation is not mortal; it is as immortal as the Easter hymn, *'O filii et filiæ,'* as the *'Dies iræ'* of the dead, as every song must be which in every country has outlived its splendor, its happiness, its dead prosperity."

As the Duchess left her box she wiped away the tears which clearly showed that she was thinking of the Venice that is no more; Vendramin kissed her hand.

The performance closed in a chaos of turbulence. Hisses and abuse were showered upon Genovese, while a paroxysm of frenzy greeted La Tinti as applause. For a long time the Venetians had not experienced so enlivening an evening. The antagonism aroused had warmed and invigorated them, for such is never wanting in Italy, where the smallest towns have ever thrived on the diverse interests of two opposing factions. In every place the Guelfs and Ghibellines; at Verona, the Capulets and Montagues; at Bologna, the Geremei and Lomelli; at Genoa, the Fieschi and Doria; at every place the patricians and the populace, and the senate and tribunes of the Roman republic; at Florence, the Medici and the Passi; at Milan, the Sforza and the Visconti; at Rome, the Orsini and the Colonna; in fact, everywhere and upon all occasions the same impulse exists.

Already upon the streets there were "Genovists" and "Tintists."

The Duchess was escorted by the Prince; the former was still more depressed by the loves of Osiride; she dreaded a similar disaster to herself. She clung the closer to Emilio, as though trying to keep him next her heart.

"Remember your promise," said Vendramin; "I shall look for you in the square."

As Vendramin took the Frenchman's arm purposing a walk together on the Piazzo San Marco, as he awaited the Prince:

"I shall but be too glad if he does not come," said he.

This formed the subject for a discourse between them, and Vendramin considered it a favorable opportunity in which to consult the physician. He told him of the peculiar situation in which Emilio was placed.

As every Frenchman does on every occasion, the Frenchman laughed. Vendramin was angry, for he viewed the matter very seriously, but he became mollified when that disciple of Majendie, of Cuvier, of Dupuytren, and of Brossais said that most surely he could cure the Prince of his high-falutin rhapsodies, that he could dispel the celestial poetry he had wrapped about Massimilla as by a cloud.

"A pleasant form of misfortune!" said he. "The ancients were not quite the fools we believe them to be from their heaven of crystal and their ideas of physics, which in the fable of Ixion is symbolical of that power which annuls the body and creates the spirit lord of all."

Presently Vendramin and the physician met Genovese and, accompanying, him, the fantastic Capraja. The august melomaniac was anxiously trying to learn the cause of the tenor's *fiasco*. Genovese, when questioned, spoke very rapidly, the same as all men do who become intoxicated in the bursting forth of ideas caused in them by a passion.

"Yes, signori, I love her; I adore her with such frenzy as I never thought I could experience, since I have become tired of women. Women play the devil with art. Work and pleasure can never get along together. Clarina fancies me jealous of her success; she believes I attempted to hamper her triumph at Venice; but in the wings I was clapping and shouting *diva* louder than any person in the house."

"Even so," said Cataneo, as he joined them, "but that does not account for your becoming, from a divine singer, one of the most execrable ones that ever pumped air through his larynx, without adding any of the charm which fascinates and ravishes us."

"I!" said the virtuoso. "I a poor singer! I who am the equal of the greatest masters?"

But now the doctor and Vendramin, Capraja, Cataneo, and Genovese had arrived at the piazetta. It was midnight. The glistening bay, in its outline of the Saint-Georges and Saint-Paul churches, at the end of the Giudecca, at the juncture of the beginning of the Grand Canal, that has its mysterious inchoation under the *Dogana* and the Santa Maria della Salute church, lay beautiful and placid. The moon shone on the barques alongside the Rive des Esclavons. There is no tide to the waters of Venice, and they seemed to be alive, dancing, as they were, in myriads of spangles

No singer had ever a more resplendent stage.

Genovese seemed to call upon the heavens and the earth as witnesses, as he made an emphatic gesture; then he commenced to sing, accompanied only by the lapping wavelets, *"Ombra adoratta,"* the *chef-d'œuvre* of Crescentini.

This air, as it rose up amidst the statues of Saint-Theodore and Saint-Georges, right in the breast of sleeping Venice, which were radiant in the moonlight, the words, so peculiarly harmonizing with the scene, the melancholy passion of the singer, bound the Italians and the Frenchman as by a spell.

Vendramin's face became wet with tears at the first notes. Capraja stood as motionless as one of the statues in the ducal palazzo. Cataneo showed some emotion. The Frenchman was pensive, he was taken quite by surprise; he seemed like a scientific man face to face with a phenomenon which has upset the axioms upon which he is founded. These four so different minds, with so little faith; these that believed in nothing but themselves for themselves, with nothing to follow, who looked upon their existence as at best a chanceling and fortuitous being, like the petty life of a plant or a bug, gained a glimpse of heaven. No music could so surely deserve the epitaph—divine. Those so soothing notes were poured forth and bathed their souls in soft and languorous airs. These vapors, which seemed to the listeners to be almost visible, resembling the marble forms around them in the silvery rays of the moon, had angels seated upon them, waving their wings in love and adoration. The simple, artless melody penetrated the soul like a ray of light. It was a sacred passion!

But the vanity of the tenor awakened them like a sudden blow.

"Say, now, am I a poor singer?" he cried as he finished the air.

His audience regretted that the instrument was not a heavenly thing. It was no more, this angelic song, than the outcome of a man's wounded pride! The singer experienced nothing, thought nothing of the pious feelings and divine imagery that he had created in the others; not more, in reality, than Paganini's violin can understand what he makes it declare. They, in imagination, had seen Venice lifting its shroud and giving utterance to song—and here it was but the result of a tenor's *fiasco!*

"Can you guess what such a phenomenon means?" the Frenchman asked Capraja; he wished to make him talk, as the Duchess had alluded to him as being a deep thinker.

"What phenomenon?" said Capraja.

"Genovese, who, in the absence of La Tinti, is most admirable, and when singing with her makes the braying of a donkey."

"He obeys a supernatural law of which one of your chemists might be prepared to give the mathematical formula, and which the succeeding generation may probably express in a report filled with *x*, *a*, and *b*, stirred up among a number of algebraic signs, nodes, and quips that give one the colic; for, as a fact, the greatest mathematics ever conceived add nothing to our sum-total of happiness.

"If an artist becomes so unfortunately full of the passion that he would fain express, he cannot fulfill his desire be-

cause then he is the real thing and no longer its image. Art is the work of the brain, not the heart. When a subject possesses you, then you are no longer its master, but its slave; you are a king besieged by his people. When you have too keen a feeling, at the instant you wish to represent that feeling, you cause an insurrection of sense against the faculty of government."

"May we not be able to convince ourselves of this truth by some further experiment?" said the doctor.

"Cataneo," said Capraja to his friend, "contrive to bring your tenor and the prima donna together again."

"Very well, gentlemen," replied the Duke, "sup with me. We ought to effect a reconcilation between Genovese and La Clarina; if not, the season is ruined for Venice."

The invitation was accepted.

"Gondoliers!" called Cataneo.

"One moment," said Vendramin, "Memmi is awaiting me at Florian's; I cannot leave him to himself; if we do not make him tipsy to-night, he will kill himself to-morrow."

"Corpo santo!" cried the Duke. "I must keep that young man alive, if only for the future prospects of my line. I will also invite him."

They all returned to Florian's, where an eager and stormy discussion was going on in the crowd, to which an end was put by the tenor's arrival. By a window in a corner, gloomy, in a fixed gaze and dejected attitude, stood the Prince, looking at the balcony, the very image of dismal despair.

"That crazy fellow," said the physician in French to Vendramin, "knows not what he wants. That man can create in Massimilla Doni a being apart from the rest of creation; he possesses her in the skies in the midst of an ideal splendor that no earthly power can make real. He sees his mistress always sublime, ever pure; he always hears within him what we heard by the sea; he lives forever in the light of a pair of eyes which create for him the warmth and golden radiance that halos the Virgin in the *Assumption* by Titian, after Raphael had invented it for him and revealed it to him in the *Transfiguration*, and this man wishes to smear the poem. My advice is that he makes a combination in one woman of his sensual delights and his divine worship. In short, like all and every one of us, he must be given a mistress.

"He had a divinity, and the miserable creature insists that it shall be a female! I can assure monsieur that he will resign heaven. I won't answer, though, for it that he may not at the last die of despair.

"O, ye faces of women so daintly outlined in a pure and lovely oval, which reminds us of art's creations where it has very successfully rivaled nature! Celestial feet that cannot walk; a form so slender that an earthly breeze would break; a frail shape which cannot conceive; virgins that visited our dreams when we grew out of childhood, those we adored in secret, and worshiped without hope, clothed in the ray of some unwearying, voluptuous desire; maidens whom we shall never again behold, but the smiles from whom remain ever supreme, throughout our lives, what hog of Epicurus will insist on dragging you down to the filth of this world!

"The sun, monsieur, gives heat and

light to the world only because it is placed at a distance of thirty-three millions of leagues away. Come nearer to it and science warns you that it is not really hot nor luminous—for science is of some use," he added, turning to Capraja.

"For a Frenchman and a doctor, that is not so bad," said Capraja, as he patted the foreigner on his shoulder. "In those few words you have solved the question which Europeans have least understood in the whole of Dante—his Beatrice. Yes, Beatrice, that ideal form, the queen of the poet's phantasies, chosen in preference to all the elect, consecrated by tears, deified in his memory, always young in the fact of his perpetual desire!"

"Prince," said the Duke to Emilio, "come and sup with me. It is impossible you should refuse the poor Neapolitan from whom you have stolen both his wife and his mistress."

This broad Neapolitan jest, spoken as it was with aristocratic grace, made Emilio smile; he permitted the Duke to take his arm and lead him thither.

Already Cataneo had sent a messenger to his house from the café.

As the Palazzo Memmi was on the Grand Canal, but a short distance away from Santa Maria della Salute, the way thither was either by gondola or on foot by passing around the Rialto. The four guests would not hear of separation, so all walked; the infirmities of the Duke compelled his making use of a gondola.

Toward two o'clock in the morning the passers-by would have seen the light pouring out of every window of the Palazzo Memmi and across the Grand Canal; they would have heard also the delightful overture to *Semiramide,* performed at the base of the stairway by the orchestra from the Fenice, in serenading La Tinti.

The company was at supper on the third-floor gallery. From the balcony La Tinti in return sang *"Buona sera,"* Almavida's *aria* in *Il Barbiere,* the while the steward of the Duke distributed largess from his master to the impecunious artists, and bade them to dinner on the coming day. These civilities are expected of great lords who protect singers, and of fine ladies who have their tenors and bassos. In such cases there is naught for it but to marry the whole *corps de théâtre.*

Cataneo did things in great style; he was the banker for the manager; this season alone had cost him two thousand crowns.

The palace had been furnished by him; he had wines from every country and had imported a French chef. The supper, therefore, was a royal banquet.

All through the meal the Prince, who was seated next to La Tinti, was vivdly alive to what is termed by the poets "the darts of love."

As the thought of God is sometimes obscured in clouds of doubt in the consciences of solitary thinkers, so was the transcendental vision of Massimilla eclipsed to the sight of Emilio.

Clarina believed herself the happiest woman in the world; knew it when she saw that Emilio was in love with her. She felt assured of keeping him, and her delight was plain to be seen in her countenance; her beauty was so radiant, so dazzling, that none of the men could refrain from expressing their admira-

tion as they lifted their glasses; it was impossible to resist a courtly bow to her.

"The Duchess cannot be placed in comparison with La Tinti," said the Frenchman, who had already forgotten his theories under the burning glance of the eyes of the Sicilian.

The tenor ate and drank perfunctorily; he appeared to only wish to identify his life with that of the prima donna; he seemed to have lost that keen sense of enjoyment so characteristic of Italian male vocalists.

"Come, signorina," said the Duke, looking imploringly at Clarina, "and you, *caro primo uomo,*" he continued to Genovese, "let your voices unite in one true sound. Give us the C of *Qual portento,* when the light comes in the oratorio we have just listened to, and thus convince my old friend Capraja that the unison is far superior to any embellishment of harmony."

"I will bear her away from that Prince whom she loves; she worships him, it is apparent in her eyes," muttered Genovese to himself.

The astonishment of the guests can only be imagined when, after hearing him in the open air, he began to bray, coo, mew, squeak, guggle, bellow, bark, thunder, squeal, shriek, and produced sounds even which can only be described as a hoarse rattle; he went, in fact, through a non-understandable farce; what time his face was transfigured with an expression of rapture, like a martyr, as painted by Zurbaran or Murillo, a Titian or Raphael. The universal yell of laughter became changed to nearly tragic gravity when they comprehended that Genovese was terribly in earnest.

La Tinti saw that her associate was enamored of her; that he had spoken the truth when on the stage with her in that land of falsehood.

"Poverino!" she whispered, as she stroked the hand of the Prince beneath the table.

"By the holies!" exclaimed Capraja, "please let me know what score you are reading at this time—murderer of Rossini? Pray instruct us of what you are thinking—what demon is it that struggles in your throat?"

"Demon!" cried Genovese, "nay, the rather say: God of music. My eyes, like St. Cecilia's, see angles pointing with their fingers to show me the staff of the score writ in fiery notes; I am trying to keep pace with them. *Per Dio!* do you not comprehend? My being is filled with inspiration; it crowds my heart, my lungs; my soul and my throat possess the one life.

"Have you never heard in a dream the most entrancing strains, the thoughts of unborn musicians who have utilized pure sound, which has been hidden by nature in everything—sounds which we, more or less truthfully, bring forth, employing the instruments we use to create groups of various colors? These in dream-concerts are heard free of every imperfection of those performers whom it is impossible shall be all emotion, all soul. And I, I give you that perfection and you upbraid me!

"You are as crazy as the parquet at the Fenice when they hissed me! I have contempt for the vulgar crowd who are unable to mount with me to those alps where I reign over art—I make my appeal to remarkable men, to a Frenchman—why, he is gone!"

"Half an hour since," said Vendramin.

"It is a pity. Perhaps he might have understood me, as worthy Italians, lovers of art, do not——"

"There you go!" said Capraja, smiling and giving a light tap on the tenor's head. "Ride away on the celestial Ariosto's hippogrif; chase, then, your dazzling chimera, musical *teriaki* as you are!"

For a truth, everyone else believed that Genovese was simply drunk, and they let him talk without paying any attention to him. It was only Capraja that understood the case put by the French physician.

The wine of Cyprus had loosened every tongue, and each one pranced around on his own particular hobby; meanwhile the Frenchman was in a gondola awaiting the Duchess, to whom he had forwarded a note written by Vendramin.

Massimilla made her appearance in her night-wrapper; she had been so alarmed at the Prince's adieu and further startled by the hope suggested in the letter.

"Madame," said the Frenchman, as he handed her to a seat, desiring the gondolier to start, "at this instant the life of Prince Emilio is in jeopardy and only yourself can save him."

"What must be done?" she asked.

"Ah! Will you resign yourself to perform a degrading act—despite the noblest face in Italy? Is it that you can descend from your heaven of azure into the bed of a courtesan? In short, can an angel of refinement as you are, of such true and unspotted beauty, beseem yourself to imagine what the love of a Tinti can be—put yourself in her place so much as to deceive Emilio's ardor, and who is too much intoxicated to be altogether clear of sight?"

"And is that all?" said she, with a smile that betrayed to the Frenchman one view of the delicious nature of an Italian woman in love which he had not before perceived. "I will out-Tinti La Tinti if necessary to save the life of my friend."

"Then you will blend two species of love into one; he now sees them as separated from each other, divided by mountains of poetic imaginings; these will melt away like snow upon a glacier under the fierce rays of a midsummer sun."

"I shall be your debtor throughout eternity," said the Duchess soberly.

When the Frenchman returned to the hall, he showed a look of satisfaction which Emilio, who was absorbed by La Tinti, did not observe; the banquet had now become an orgy and was stamped with Venetian frenzy. The Prince was promising himself a further indulgence in the ravishing delights he had already tasted, while La Tinti, a genuine Sicilian, was idly floating on the sweet current of a maddening passion now on the verge of being again gratified.

When the Frenchman whispered a few words to Vendramin, La Tinti was evidently troubled.

"What are you plotting?" she asked the friend of the Prince.

"Are you a good girl?" inquired the doctor in her ear, assuming the operator's sternness.

These words thrust themselves into her understanding as though struck by a dagger in her heart.

"It is to save Emilio's life," added Vendramin.

"Come here," said the doctor to Clarina.

The poor singer arose and walked to the end of the table, seating herself between the doctor and Vendramin, and looking like a criminal in the presence of the confessor and executioner.

She held out for a long time, but at length she yielded, out of love for Emilio.

The last words of the doctor were:

"And you must cure Genovese."

As she returned around the table she spoke a few words to the tenor. Then she went to the Prince, she placed her arms around his neck, she kissed his hair, a despairing expression on her face, noticed by the only two who seemed to have any sense remaining, Vendramin and the doctor, and then vanished into her chamber.

Emilio, who noticed that Genovese had left the table, while Cataneo and Capraja were engrossed in a long-winded argument on music, then crept to the door of the bedroom, raised the portière, and slipped in like an eel into the mud.

"But see you, Cataneo," said Capraja, "you have extracted the last particle of physical enjoyment, now here you are, strung on wires like a harlequin of cardboard, all patterned with scars, and never making a move except the string of perfect unison is pulled."

"And you, my Capraja, you who have squeezed dry every idea—are you not also in the same boat? You only exist by riding the hobby-horse of a *roulade;* is it not so?"

"I? I possess the whole world!" exclaimed Capraja, with the gesture of a sovereign and an extended hand.

"And I have devoured it!" answered the Duke.

The Prince's sleep was disturbed by a dream, next morning, after a night of unalloyed happiness. On his heart he felt the trickling of pearls let fall by an angel: he awoke, and found himself laved in the tears of Massimilla Doni. He lay in her arms and she had watched him as he slept.

The same evening, though La Tinti would not let him arise until two o'clock in the afternoon—a thing which is considered very bad for a tenor voice—Genovese, at the Fenice, sang most divinely his part in *Semiramide.*

Together with La Tinti he was many times recalled, new diadems were presented, the parquet was delirious with joy; the tenor had done with trying to charm the prima donna by the angelic method.

Vendramin was the only one whom the physician could not cure. Love for a country that no longer exists is a passion beyond remedy. This young Venetian, who by living in his republic of the thirteenth century and in the embrace of that pernicious harlot known as opium, when he found himself in this work-a-day world, brought thither by reaction, at last succumbed, pitied and regretted by his friends.

How shall the conclusion of this adventure be given, for it is so disastrously humdrum. One word is enough for those who adore the ideal:

The Duchess was big with child.

The Peri, the naiads, the fays, the sylphs of ancient lore, the Muses of Greece, the Marble Virgins of the Cer-

tosa at Pavia, Michael Angelo's *Day and Night,* the little angels which Bellini was the first to place at the feet of his church paintings, and which Raphael painted so exquisitely in his *Virgin with the Donor,* and the shivering *Madonna of Dresden,* Orcagna's exquisite *Maidens* in the church of San-Michele, Florence; the celestial choir round the tomb of Saint-Sebaldus, Nuremberg; the *Virgins* of the Duomo at Milan, the whole population of a hundred Gothic cathedrals, all the race of beings who burst through their moldiness to visit you, all grand imaginative artists—each and all of these angelic and disembodied maidens gathered about Massimilla's bed and wept.

The Abbe Birotteau

To DAVID, Sculptor

The duration of the work on which I write your name—doubly illustrious in our age—is most uncertain, while you inscribe mine on bronze, which outlives nations even when stamped only by the vulgar die of the coiner. Will not numismatists be puzzled by the many crowned heads in your studio, when they find among the ashes of Paris these lives, prolonged by you beyond the life of nations, in which they will fancy they discover dynasties? Yours is this divine prerogative—mine be the gratitude.

De Balzac.

IN THE early autumn of 1826 the Abbé Birotteau, the principal personage of this story, was caught in a shower on his way home from the house where he had spent the evening. He was just crossing, as fast as his burly weight permitted, a little deserted square known as the Close, lying behind the apse of Saint-Gatien at Tours.

The Abbé Birotteau, a short man of apoplectic build, and now sixty years of age, had already had several attacks of gout. Hence, of all the minor miseries of human life, that which the worthy man held in most horror was the sudden wetting of his shoes with their large silver buckles, and the immersion of their soles. In fact, notwithstanding the flannel lining in which he packed his feet in all weathers, with the care a priest always takes of himself, they often got a little damp; then, next day, the gout unfailingly gave him proof of its constancy.

However, as the cobbles in the Close are always dry, and as the Abbé had won three francs and ten sous at whist from Mme. de Listomère, he submitted to the rain with resignation from the middle of the Place de l'Archevêché, where it had begun to fall heavily. Moreover, at this moment he was brooding over his chimera, a longing already twelve years old, a priest's day-dream! A dream which, recurring every evening, now seemed likely to find fulfillment; in short, he was too well wrapped in the fur sleeves of a canon's robes to

be sensitive to the severities of the weather. In the course of this evening the accustomed guests who met at Mme. de Listomère's had as good as promised him a nomination to the cannon's stall at present vacant in the Metropolitan Chapter of Saint-Gatien, by proving to him that no one better deserved it than he, whose claims were indisputable, though so long ignored. If he had lost at cards, if he had heard that the canonry was given to the Abbé Poirel, his rival, the good man would have found the rain very cold; he might have abused life. But he was in one of those rare moments when delightful sensations make us forget everything. Though he hastened his pace, it was in obedience to a mechanical impulse, and truth—so indispensable in a tale of domestic life—requires us to say that he was thinking neither of the shower nor of the gout.

There were formerly round this Close, on the side by Grand Rue, a number of houses standing within a wall, and belonging to the Cathedral, inhabited by certain dignitaries of the Chapter. Since the sequestration of ecclesiastical property, the town has taken the alley dividing these houses as a public way, by the name of Rue de la Psalette, leading from the Close to the High Street. The name itself shows that here formerly dwelt the precentor with his schools and those who were within his jurisdiction. The left side of the street is formed of one large house, its garden walls being bridged by the flying buttresses of Saint-Gatien, which spring from the ground of its strip of garden, making it doubtful whether the Cathedral were built before or after that ancient dwelling. But by examining the moldings and the shape of the windows, the arch of the doorway, and the external architecture of the house, darkened by time, an archæologist detects that it had always been part and parcel of the magnificent church to which it is wedded. An antiquarian—if there were one at Tours, one of the least literary towns of France—might even discern at the entrance to the passage from the Close some traces of the covered archway which of old served as an entry to these priestly dwellings, and which must have harmonized in character with the main edifice.

This house, being to the north of Saint-Gatien, lies always in the shadow of this vast Cathedral, on which time has cast its gloomy mantle, stamped wrinkles, and set its damp chill, its mosses, and straggling weeds. And it is perennially wrapped in the deepest silence, broken only by the tolling of the bells, the chanted service heard through the Cathedral walls, or the cawing of jackdaws nesting at the top of the belfries. The spot is a desert of masonry, a solitude full of individuality, in which none could dwell but beings absolutely mindless, or gifted with immense strength of soul.

The house in question had always been the home of Abbés, and belonged ot an old maid named Mlle. Gamard. Although during the Terror the property had been bought from the nation by Mlle. Gamard's father, as the worthy maiden had for twenty years past let the rooms to priests, no one, at the Restoration, could take it ill that a bigot should not surrender a piece of national

property; religious persons may have supposed that she meant to bequeath it to the Chapter, and the worldly saw no change in its uses.

It was to this house, then, that the Abbé Birotteau was making his way; he had lived in it for two years. His rooms there had been till then, as the canonry was now, the object of his desires, and his *hoc erat in votis* for a dozen years before. To board with Mlle. Gamard and to be made a cannon were the two great aims of his life; and perhaps they completely sum up the ambitions of a priest who, regarding himself as a pilgrim to eternity, can in this world wish for no more than a good room, a good table, clean clothes, shoes with silver buckles—all-sufficient for his animal needs—and a canonry to satisfy his pride, the indefinable feeling which will accompany us, no doubt, into the presence of God, since there are grades of rank among the saints.

But the Abbé Birotteau's desire for the rooms he now occupied, so trivial a feeling in the eyes of the worldly wise, had been to him a perfect passion, a passion full of obstacles, and, like the most criminal passions, full of hopes, joys, and remorse.

The arrangements and space in her house did not allow Mlle. Gamard to take more than two resident boarders. Now, about twelve years before the day when Birotteau went to lodge with this maiden lady, she had undertaken to preserve in health and contentment M. l'Abbé Troubert and M. l'Abbé Chapeloud. The Abbé Troubert still lived, the Abbé Chapeloud was dead, and Birotteau had been his immediate successor.

The late Abbé Chapeloud, in his lifetime Canon of Saint-Gatien, had been the Abbé Birotteau's intimate friend. Every time the priest had gone into the Canon's rooms he had unfailingly admired them, the furniture, and the books. This admiration one day gave birth to a desire to possess these fine things. The Abbé Birotteau had found it impossible to smother this desire, which often made him dreadfully unhappy when he reflected that only the death of his best friend could satisfy this hidden covetousness, which nevertheless constantly increased.

The Abbé Chapeloud and his friend Birotteau were not rich. Both sons of peasants, they had nothing but the poor emolument doled out to priests, and their small savings had been spent in tiding over the evil days of the Revolution. When Napoleon re-established Catholic worship, the Abbé Chapeloud was made Canon of Saint-Gatien, and the Abbé Birotteau became Vicaire, or Mass-priest, of the Cathedral. It was then that Chapeloud went to board with Mlle. Gamard. When Birotteau first called on the Canon in his new residence, he thought the rooms delightfully arranged, but that was all. The beginnings of this concupiscence for furniture were like those of a real passion in a young man, which often first is no more than cold admiration of the woman he subsequently loves forever.

These rooms, reached by a stone staircase, were on the side of the house looking south. The Abbé Troubert inhabited the ground floor, and Mlle. Gamard the first floor of the main front to the street. When Chapeloud went in, the rooms were bare and the ceilings

blackened by smoke. The chimney fronts, clumsily carved in stone, had never been painted. All the furniture the poor Canon could at first put in consisted of a bed, a table, some chairs, and his few books. The apartment was like a fine woman in rags.

But two or three years later, an old lady having left the Abbé Chapeloud two thousand francs, he laid out the money in the purchase of an oak bookcase, saved from the destruction of an old château pulled down by the *Bande noire* (a company who bought old buildings to demolish), and remarkable for carvings worthy of the admiration of artists. The Abbé made the purchase, fascinated less by its cheapness than by its exact correspondence in size with the dimension of his corridor. His savings then allowed him completely to restore this corridor, until now abandoned to neglect. The floor was carefully waxed, the ceiling whitewashed, the woodwork painted and grained to imitate the tone and knots of oak. A marble chimney-shelf replaced the old one. The Canon had taste enough to hunt up and find some old arm-chairs of carved walnut wood. Then a long ebony table and two little Boule cabinets gave this library a finish full of character.

Within two years, the liberality of various devout persons, and the bequests of pious penitents, though small, had filled the shelves of the bookcase hitherto vacant. Finally, an uncle of Chapeloud's, an old Oratorian, left him his collection in folio of the *Fathers of the Church,* and several other large works of value to an ecclesiastic.

Birotteau, more and more surprised by the successive transformations in this formerly bare corridor, by degrees became involuntarily covetous. He longed to possess this study, so perfectly adapted to the gravity of priestly habits. This passion grew day by day. Spending whole days, as he often did, in working in this snuggery, he could appreciate the silence and peace of it, after having at first admired its comfortable arrangement. For the next few years the Abbé Chapeloud used this retreat as an oratory which his lady friends delighted to embellish. Later, again, a lady presented to the Canon a piece of furniture in worsted work for his bedroom, at which she had long been stitching under the amiable priest's eyes without his suspecting its purpose. Then Birotteau was as much dazzled by the bedroom as by the library.

Finally, three years before his death, the Abbé Chapeloud had completed the comfort of his rooms by decorating the drawing-room. Though simply furnished with red Utrecht velvet, this had been too much for Birotteau. From the day when the Canon's friend first saw the red silk curtains, the mahogany furniture, the Aubusson carpet that graced this large room, freshly painted, Chapeloud's apartment became to him the object of a secret monomania. To live there, to sleep in the great bed with silk curtains in which the Canon slept, and have all his comforts about him as Chapeloud had, seemed to Birotteau perfcet happiness; he looked for nothing beyond. Every feeling which envy and ambition arouse in the souls of other men, was, in that of the Abbé Birotteau, centered in the deep and secret longing with which he wished for a home like that created for himself

by the Abbé Chapeloud. When his friend fell ill, it was no doubt sincere affection that brought Birotteau to see him; but on first hearing of the Canon's sickness, and while sitting with him, there rose from the depths of his soul a thousand thoughts, of which the simplest formula was always this, "If Chapeloud dies, I can have his rooms." Still, as Birotteau had a good heart, strict principles, and a narrow intellect, he never went so far as to conceive of means for getting his friend to leave him his library and furniture.

The Abbé Chapeloud, an amiable and indulgent egoist, guessed his friend's mania—which it was not difficult to do, and forgave it—which for a priest would seem less easy. Still Birotteau, whose friendship remained unaltered, never ceased to walk day after day with the Canon up and down the same path in the Mall at Tours without curtailing by a single minute the time devoted to this exercise for the last twenty years. Birotteau thought of his involuntary wishes as sins, and would have been capable, in sheer contrition, of the utmost devotion for Chapeloud's sake.

The Canon paid his debt to this sincere and artless brotherliness by saying, a few days before his death, to the priest, who was reading to him from the *Quotidienne,* "You will get the rooms this time. I feel that it is all over with me."

In fact, by his will, the Abbé Chapeloud left his library and furniture to Birotteau. The possession of these much-longed-for things, and the prospect of being taken as a boarder by Mlle. Gamard, greatly softened Birotteau's grief at the loss of his friend the Canon. He would not perhaps have called him to life again, but he wept for him. For several days he was like Gargantua, whose wife died in giving birth to Pantagruel, and who knew not whether to rejoice over his son's birth or to lament at having buried his good Badebec, and made the mistake of rejoicing at his wife's death and deploring the birth of Pantagruel.

The Abbé Birotteau spent the first days of his grief in verifying the volumes of *his* library, and enjoying the use of *his* furniture, examining them, and saying in a tone, which, unfortunately, could not be recorded, "Poor Chapeloud!" In short, his joy and his grief were so absorbing that he felt no distress at seeing the canonry bestowed on another, though the lamented Chapeloud had always hoped that Birotteau might be his successor. Mlle. Gamard received the Abbé with pleasure as a boarder, and he thus enjoyed thenceforth all the delights of material existence that the deceased Canon had so highly praised.

Incalculable advantages! For, to hear the late departed Canon Chapeloud, not one of the priests who dwelt in the town of Tours, not even the Archbishop himself, could be the object of care so delicate or so precise as that lavished by Mlle. Gamard on her two boarders. The first words spoken by the Canon to his friend as they walked in the Mall had almost always referred to the excellent dinner he had just eaten; and it was a rare thing if, in the course of the seven walks they took in the week, he did not happen to say at least fourteen times, "That good woman has certainly a vocation for taking charge of the priesthood."

"Only think," said the Canon to Birotteau, "for twelve successive years clean linen, albs, surplices, bands—nothing has ever been missing. I always find everything in its place and in sufficient numbers, all smelling of orris-root. My furniture is constantly polished, and so well wiped that for a long time past I have not known what dust means. Did you ever see a speck in my rooms? Then the fire-logs are well chosen, the smallest things are all good; in short, it is as if Mlle. Gamard always had an eye on my room. I cannot recollect in ten years ever having had to ring twice for anything whatever. That I call living! never to have to look for a thing, not even for one's slippers; always to find a good fire and a good table. Once my bellows put me out, the nozzle had got burnt; I had not to complain twice. The very next day mademoiselle had bought me a nice pair of bellows and the pair of tongs you see me use to put the fire together."

Birotteau's only reply was, "Smelling of orris-root!" That smelling of orris-root always struck him. The Canon's words painted a really ideal state of happiness to the poor priest whose bands and albs nearly turned his brain; for he had no sense of order, and not infrequently forgot to bespeak his dinner. And so, whenever he caught sight of Mlle. Gamard at Saint-Gatien, either while going round for the offertory or while reading Mass, he never failed to give her a gentle and kindly glance such as Saint Teresa may have raised to heaven.

Though the comfort which every creature desires, and of which he had so often dreamed, had now fallen to his lot, as it is difficult for any man, even for a priest, to live without a hobby, for the last eighteen months the Abbé Birotteau had substituted for his two gratified passions a craving for a canonry. The title of canon had become to him what that of a peer must be to a plebeian minister. And the probability of a nomination, the hopes he had just been encouraged in at Mme. de Listomère's, had so effectually turned his brain that it was only on reaching home that he discovered that he had left his umbrella at her house. Perhaps, indeed, but for the rain that fell in torrents, he would not have remembered it then, so completely was he absorbed in repeating to himself all that had been said on the subject of his preferment by the members of the party at Mme. de Listomère's —an old lady with whom he spent every Wednesday evening.

The Abbé rang sharply as a hint to the maid not to keep him waiting. Then he shrank into the corner by the door so as to be splashed as little as possible; but the water from the roof ran off precisely on the toes of his shoes, and the gusts of wind blew on to him squalls of rain not unlike a repeated shower bath. After calculating the time necessary for coming from the kitchen to pull the latch-string under the door, he rang again, a very significant peal. "They cannot have gone out," thought he, hearing not a sound within. And for the third time he rang, again and again, a peal that sounded so sharply through the house, and was so loudly repeated by every echo in the Cathedral, that it was impossible not to be roused by this assertive jangle. And a few moments after it was not without satisfaction,

mingled with annoyance, that he heard the maid's wooden shoes clattering over the pebbly stone floor. Still, the gouty priest's troubles were not over so soon as he thought. Instead of pulling the latch, Marianne was obliged to unlock the door with the huge key, and draw back the bolts.

"How can you leave me to ring three times in such weather?" said he to Marianne.

"Why, sir, as you see, the house was locked up. Everybody has been in bed a long time; it has struck a quarter to ten. Mademoiselle must have thought you had not gone out."

"But you yourself saw me go out. Besides, mademoiselle knows very well that I go to Mme. de Listomère's every Wednesday."

"Well, sir, I only did as mademoiselle told me," replied Marianne, locking the door again.

These words were a blow to the Abbé, which he felt all the more keenly for the intense bliss of his day-dream. He said nothing, but followed Marianne to the kitchen, to fetch his bedroom candle, which he supposed would have been brought down there. But instead of going to the kitchen, Marianne lighted the Abbé up to his rooms, where he found the candlestick on a table outside the door of the red drawing-room, in a sort of anteroom, formed of the stair-landing, which the Canon had shut in for the purpose by a large glass partition. Dumb with surprise, he hurried into his bedroom, found no fire on the hearth, and called Marianne, who had not yet had time to go downstairs.

"You have not lighted my fire?" said he.

"I beg your pardon, sir; it must have gone out again."

Birotteau looked again at the hearth, and saw plainly that the ashes had been piled there since the morning.

"I want to dry my feet," he went on; "make up the fire."

Marianne obeyed with the haste of a woman who wants to go to sleep. While the Abbé himself hunted for his slippers, failing to see them in the middle of his bed-rug, as usual, he made certain observations as to the way Marianne was dressed, which proved to a demonstration that she had not just got out of bed, as she had asserted. And he then remembered that for about a fortnight past he had been weaned from all the little attentions that had made life so endurable for the last eighteen months. Now, as it is in the nature of narrow minds to argue from minute things, he at once gave himself up to deep reflections on these four incidents, imperceptible to anybody else, but to him nothing less than four catastrophes. The oversight as to his slippers, Marianne's falsehood with regard to the fire, the unaccustomed removal of his candlestick to the table in the ante-room, and the long waiting so ingeniously inflicted on him, on the threshold in the rain, were ominous of a complete wreck of his happiness.

When the fire was blazing on the dogs, when his night-lamp was lighted, and Marianne had left him without inquiring as usual, "Does monsieur need anything further?" the Abbé sank gently into his departed friend's roomy and handsome easy-chair; still, his action as he dropped into it was somewhat melancholy. The worthy man was oppressed by the pre-

sentiment of terrible disaster. His eyes fell in succession on the handsome time-piece, the chest of drawers, the chairs, curtains, and rugs, the four-post bed, the holy-water shell and the crucifix, on a *Virgin* by le Valentin, on a *Christ* by Lebrun—in short, on all the details of the room; the expression of his face betrayed the pangs of the tenderest farewell that a lover ever looked at his first mistress, or an old man at his latest plantation. The Abbé had just detected —a little late, it is true—the symptoms of a covert persecution to which he had for about three months been subjected by Mlle. Gamard, whose ill-will would no doubt have been suspected sooner by a man of keener intelligence.

Have not all old maids a certain talent for emphasizing the acts and words suggested to them by hatred? They scratch as cats do. And not only do they hurt, but they take pleasure in hurting, and in making their victim see that they can hurt. While a man of the world would not have allowed himself to be clawed a second time, the worthy Birotteau had taken several scratches in the face before he had conceived of malignant purpose.

Immediately, with the inquisitorial shrewdness acquired by priests, accustomed as they are to direct consciences and to investigate trifles from the shades of the confessional, the Abbé Birotteau set to work to formulate the following proposition—as though it were the basis of a religious controversy.—Granting that Mlle. Gamard may have forgotten Mme. de Listomère's evening — that Marianne had neglected to light my fire —that they thought I was at home; as it is certain that I, *myself,* must have taken my candle-stick downstairs this morning!!!—it is impossible that Mlle. Gamard, seeing it in her sitting-room, could have supposed I had gone to bed. *Ergo,* Mlle. Gamard left me at the door in the rain on purpose; and by having the candlestick carried up to my rooms she meant me to know it.—"What does it mean?" he said aloud, carried away by the gravity of the case, as he rose to take off his wet clothes, and put on his dressing-gown and his nightcap. Then he went from the bed to the fire gesticulating and jerking out such comments as these, in various tones of voice, all ended in a falsetto pitch as though to represent points of interrogation.

"What the deuce have I done? Why does she owe me a grudge?—Marianne cannot have forgotten my fire; mademoiselle must have told her not to light it! I should be childish not to see from the tone and manner she assumes towards me that I have been so unfortunate as to displease her.—Nothing of the kind ever happened to Chapeloud! —It will be impossible for me to live in the midst of the annoyances that . . . At my age too!"

He went to bed, hoping to clear up on the morrow the cause of the hatred which was destroying forever the happiness he had enjoyed for two years after wishing for it so long. Alas! the secret motives of Mlle. Gamard's feeling against him were destined to remain forever unknown to him; not because they were difficult to guess, but because the poor man had not the simple candor which enables great minds and thorough scoundrels to recognize and judge themselves. Only a man of genius or a master of intrigue ever says to himself, "I was

to blame." Interest and talent are the only conscientious and lucid counselors.

Now, the Abbé Birotteau, whose kindliness went to the pitch of silliness, whose knowledge was a sort of veneer laid on by patient work, who had no experience whatever of the world and its ways, and who lived between the altar and the confessional, chiefly engaged in deciding trivial cases of conscience in his capacity of confessor to the schools of the town and to some noble souls who appreciated him—the Abbé Birotteau was, in short, to be regarded as a big baby to whom the greater part of social customs were absolutely unknown. At the same time, the selfishness natural to all human beings, re-enforced by the egoism peculiar to a priest, and by that of the narrow life of a provincial town, had insensibly grown strong in him without his suspecting it. If anyone had taken enough interest in searching the good man's soul to show him that, in the infinitely small details of his existence and the trivial duties of his private life, he failed essentially in the self-sacrifice he professed, he would have punished and mortified himself in all sincerity.

But those whom we offend, even unwittingly, reck not of our innocence; they desire and achieve revenge. Thus Birotteau, weak as he was, was doomed to suffer under the hand of that great distributive Justice which always trusts the world to carry out its sentences, known to many simpletons as the misfortunes of life.

There was this difference between Canon Chapeloud and the Abbé: one was a witty and ingenious egoist, the other an honest but clumsy one. When M. Chapeloud had come to board with Mlle. Gamard, he could perfectly well gauge his landlady's character. The confessional had enlightened him as to the bitterness infused into an old maid's heart by the misfortune of finding herself outside society; his behavior to Mlle. Gamard was shrewdly calculated. The lady being no more than eight-and-thirty, still had those little pretensions which, in such discreet persons, turn in later years into high opinion of themselves.

The Canon understood that, to live comfortably with Mlle. Gamard, he must always show her the same respect and attention, and be more infallible than the Pope. To attain this end he established no points of contact between himself and her beyond what the strictest politeness required, and those necessarily subsisting between two persons living under the same roof. Thus, though he and the Abbé Troubert regularly took their three meals a day, he had never appeared at breakfast, but had accustomed Mlle. Gamard to send up to him, in his bed, a cup of coffee with milk. Then, he had avoided the boredom of supper by always taking tea at some house where he spent the evening. Thus he rarely saw his landlady at any time of the day excepting at dinner, but he always came into the room a few minutes before the hour. During this polite little visit, every day of the twelve years he had spent under her roof he had asked her the same questions and received the same answers. How Mlle. Gamard had slept during the night, the breakfast, little domestic events, the appearance of her face, the health of her person, the weather, the

length of the Church services, the incidents of the morning's Mass, the health of this or that priest, constituted the themes of this daily dialogue.

During dinner he always indulged her with indirect flattery, going on from the quality of the fish, the excellence of some seasoning, or the merits of a sauce, to those of Mlle. Gamard and her virtues as a housekeeper. He was sure of soothing all the old maid's conceits when he praised the art with which her preserves were made, her gherkins pickled, and the excellence of her jam, her pies, and other gastronomical inventions. Finally, the wily Canon never quitted her yellow drawing-room without remarking that there was not another house in Tours where the coffee was so good as that he had just been drinking.

Thanks to this perfect comprehension of Mlle. Gamard's character, and this science of life as practiced by the Canon for those twelve years, no grounds had ever occurred for a discussion on any matter of domestic discipline. The Abbé Chapeloud had from the first discerned every angle, every rasping edge, every asperity in this old maid, and had so regulated the effect of the tangents where they inevitably met, as to secure from her every concession needed for peace and happiness in life. And Mlle. Gamard would always say that Canon Chapeloud was a most amiable man, very easy to live with, and full of wit.

As to the Abbé Troubert, the bigot never by any chance spoke of him. Troubert had so completely fallen into the routine of her life, like a satellite in the orbit of its planet, that he had become to her a sort of mongrel creature between those of the human and those of the canine species; he filled a place in her mind exactly below that occupied by her friends and that filled by a fat asthmatic pug-dog to which she was tenderly devoted; she managed him completely, and their interests became so inextricably knit that many persons of Mlle. Gamard's circle supposed that the Abbé Troubert had an eye to the old maid's fortune, and was attaching her to him by his constant patience, guiding her all the more effectually because he affected to obey her, never allowing her to see in him the faintest wish to rule her.

When the Canon died, the old maid, anxious to have a boarder of quiet habits, naturally thought of this priest. The Canon's will had not yet been opened when Mlle. Gamard was already meditating giving the departed Canon's upper rooms to her worthy Abbé Troubert, whom she thought but poorly lodged on the ground floor. But when the Abbé Birotteau came to discuss with her the written conditions of her terms, she found that he was so much in love with the lodgings for which he had long cherished a passion he might now avow, that she did not venture to propose an exchange, and affection gave way before the pressure of interest. To console her favorite Abbé, mademoiselle substituted a parquet flooring in a neat pattern for the white Château-Renaud tiles in the ground-floor rooms, and rebuilt a chimney that smoked.

The Abbé Birotteau had seen his friend Chapeloud constantly for twelve years, without its ever having occurred to him to wonder why he was so excessively circumspect in his intercourse with the old maid. When he came to

live under this saintly damsel's roof he felt like a lover on the verge of happiness. Even if he had not been blinded by natural stupidity, his eyes were too much dazzled by contentment for him to be capable of gauging Mlle. Gamard or of considering the due measure of his daily relations with her. Mlle. Gamard, seen from afar, through the prism of the material enjoyment the Abbé dreamed of finding with her, appeared to him an admirable creature, a perfect Christian, an essentially charitable soul, the woman of the Gospel, the wise Virgin graced with the humble and modest virtues which shed celestial fragrance over life. And thus, with all the enthusiasm of a man who has reached a long-wished-for goal, with the simplicity of a child and the silly heedlessness of an old man devoid of worldly experience, he came into Mlle. Gamard's life as a fly is caught in a spider's web.

So the first day he was to dine and sleep in the old maid's house he lingered in her drawing-room, as much in the wish to make acquaintance with her as in the inexplicable embarrassment that often troubles shy people and makes them fear lest they should be rude if they break off a conversation to leave the room. So there he remained all the evening. Another old maid, a friend of Birotteau's, Mlle. Salomon de Villenoix, came in the evening. Then Mlle. Gamard had the joy of arranging a game of boston. The Abbé, as he went to bed, thought he had had a very pleasant evening.

As yet he knew Mlle. Gamard and the Abbé Troubert but very little, and saw only the surface. Few persons show their faults unveiled at first. Generally everybody tries to assume an attractive exterior. So Birotteau conceived the delightful purpose of devoting his evenings to Mlle. Gamard instead of spending them elsewhere. The lady had some few years since conceived a desire which revived more strongly every day. This desire, common to old men, and even to pretty women, had become in her a passion like that of Birotteau for his friend Chapeloud's rooms, and was rooted in the old maid's heart by the feelings of pride, egoism, envy, and vanity which are innate in the worldly-minded. This story repeats itself in every age. You have but slightly to enlarge the circle at the bottom of which these personages are about to move, to find the coefficient motive of events which happen in the highest ranks of society.

Mlle. Gamard spent her evenings at six or eight different houses by turns. Whether it was that she was annoyed at having to seek company, and thought that at her age she had a right to expect some return; whether her conceit was affronted by her having no circle of her own; or whether it was that her vanity craved the compliments and amusements she saw her friends enjoying,—all her ambition was to make her salon a center of union towards which a certain number of persons would tend every evening with pleasure. When Birotteau and his friend Mlle. Salomon had spent a few evenings in her room with the faithful and patient Abbé Troubert, one night, as she came out of Saint-Gatien, Mlle. Gamard said to the kind friends of whom she had hitherto considered herself the slave, that those who cared to see her might very well come once a

week to her house, where a sufficient party met already to make up a game of boston; that she could not leave her new boarder, the Abbé Birotteau, alone; that Mlle. Salomon had not yet missed a single evening of the week; that she belonged to her boarders; and that, etc., etc.

Her speech was all the more humbly haughty and volubly sweet because Mlle. Salomon de Villenoix belonged to the most aristocratic circle in Tours. Though Mlle. Salomon came solely for the Abbé's sake, Mlle. Gamard triumphed in having her in her drawing-room. Thanks to the Abbé Birotteau, she found herself on the eve of succeeding in her great scheme of forming a circle which might become as numerous and as agreeable as were those of Mme. de Listomère, of Mlle. Merlin de la Blottière, and other devout persons in a position to receive the pious society of Tours. But, alas! the Abbé Birotteau brought Mlle. Gamard's hopes to an overthrow.

Now, if any persons, who have attained in life the enjoyment of a long-wished-for happiness, have entered into the gladness the Abbé must have felt in lying down to rest in Chapeloud's bed, they must also form a slight notion of Mlle. Gamard's chagrin at the ruin of her cherished scheme. After accepting his good fortune patiently enough for six months, Birotteau deserted his home, carrying with him Mlle. Salomon.

In spite of unheard-of efforts, the ambitious Gamard had secured no more than five or six recruits, whose fidelity was very problematical, and at least four unfailing visitors were needed for regular boston. She was consequently obliged to make honorable amends and return to her old friends, for old maids are too poor company to themselves not to crave the doubtful pleasures of society.

The causes of this defection are easily imagined. Though the Abbé was one of those to whom Paradise shall one day be opened in virtue of the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," he, like many fools, could not endure the weariness inflicted on him by other fools. Unintelligent persons are like weeds that thrive in good ground; they love to be amused in proportion to the degree in which they weary themselves. Being the incarnation of the dullness they suffer from, the craving they perpetually feel to be divorced from themselves produces the mania for excitement, the need to be where they are not, which characterizes them as it does other creatures who lack feeling, or whose lot is a failure, or who suffer by their own fault. Without understanding too clearly the vacuity and nullity of Mlle. Gamard, or discerning the smallness of her mind, poor Birotteau discovered, too late for happiness, the faults she had in common with all old maids, as well as those personal to herself.

What is evil, in other people, contrasts so strongly with what is good, that it generally strikes the eye before inflicting a wound. This moral phenomenon might at need justify the tendency that leads us all more or less to evil speaking. Socially speaking, it is so natural to satirize the faults of others, that we ought to forgive the severe gossip to which our own absurdities give rise, and wonder at nothing but calumny.

But the good Abbé's eyes were never

at the precise focus which enables the worldly wise to see and at once evade their neighbors' sharp tongues; to discover his landlady's faults, he was obliged to endure the warning given by nature to all its creatures, that of suffering.

Old maids, having never bent their temper or their lives to other lives and other tempers, as woman's destiny requires, have for the most part a mania for making everything about them bend to them. In Mlle. Gamard this feeling had degenerated into despotism, but this despotism could only be exerted in small things. For instance—out of a thousand cases—the basket of counters and fish placed on the boston table for the Abbé Birotteau must be left on the spot where she had put it, and the Abbé irritated her extremely by moving it, as he did almost every evening. What was the cause of this touchiness foolishly provoked by mere trifles, and what was its object? No one could say: Mlle. Gamard herself did not know.

Though very lamblike by nature, the new boarder did not like to feel the crook too often, any more than a sheep, especially a crook set with nails. Without understanding Canon Troubert's amazing patience, Birotteau was anxious to escape the bliss which Mlle. Gamard was bent on seasoning to her own taste, for she thought she could compound happiness as she could preserves; but the luckless priest set to work very clumsily, as a result of his perfectly artless nature. So the separation was not effected without some clawing and pricking, to which the Abbé Birotteau tried to seem insensible.

By the end of the first year of his life under Mlle. Gamard's roof, the Abbé had fallen into his old habits, spending two evenings a week at Mme. de Listomère's, three with Mlle. Salomon, and the other two with Mlle. Merlin de la Blottière. These ladies moved in the aristocratic sphere of Tours society, to which Mlle. Gamard was not admitted. So the landlady was excessively indignant at the Abbé's defection, which made her aware of her small importance: any kind of selection implying some contempt for the rejected object.

"M. Birotteau did not find us good enough company," the Abbé Troubert would say to Mlle. Gamard's friends when she was obliged to give up her "evenings." "He is a wit, a *gourmet!* He must have fashion, luxury, brilliant conversation, the tittle-tattle of the town."

And such words always prompted Mlle. Gamard to praise the Canon's excellent temper at the expense of Birotteau's.

"He is not so clever when all is said," she remarked. "But for Canon Chapeloud he would never have been received by Mme. de Listomère. Oh, I lost a great deal when the Abbé Chapeloud died. What an amiable man! and so easy to live with! Indeed, in twelve years we never had the smallest difficulty or disagreement."

Mlle. Gamard painted so unflattering a portrait of M. Birotteau that her innocent boarder was regarded by this citizen circle, secretly hostile to the aristocratic class, as an essentially fractious man, very difficult to get on with. Then for a few weeks the old maid had the satisfaction of hearing herself pitied by her

female friends, who, without believing a word of what they said, repeated again and again, "How can you, who are so gentle and so kind, have inspired him with such dislike——?" or, "Be comforted, dear Mlle. Gamard, everyone knows you too well——" and so forth.

Delighted, nevertheless, to escape spending an evening each week in the Close—the most deserted and gloomy spot in all Tours, and the most remote from the center of life—they all blessed the Abbé.

Love or hatred must constantly increase between two persons who are always together; every moment fresh reasons are found for loving or hating better. Thus to Mlle. Gamard the Abbé Birotteau became unendurable. Eighteen months after taking him as a boarder, just when the good man believed he had found the peace of contentment in the silence of aversion, and prided himself on having come so comfortably to terms with the old woman, to use his expression, he was to her the object of covert persecution and calmly planned animosity.

The four capital facts of the closed door, the forgotten slippers, the lack of fire, the candlestick taken to his rooms, alone could betray the terrible enmity of which the last effects were not to fall on him till the moment when they would be irremediable. As he went to sleep, the good Abbé racked his brain, but vainly—and, indeed, he must soon have come to the bottom of it—to account for Mlle. Gamard's singularly uncivil behavior. In point of fact, as he had originally acted very logically, obeying the natural law of his egoism, he could not possibly form a guess as to how he had offended his landlady. While great things are simple to understand, and easy to express, the mean things of life need much detail. The incidents which constitute the prologue, as it were, to this parochial drama, in which the passions will be seen not less violent than if they had been excited by important interests, necessitated this long introduction, and any exact historian would have found it difficult to abridge the trivial tale.

When he awoke next morning, the Abbé's thoughts were so much set on the canonry, that he forgot the four circumstances which, the evening before, had appeared to him to be sinister prognostics of a future full of disaster. Birotteau was not the man to get up without a fire; he rang to announce to Marianne that he was awake, and wanted her; then, as he was wont, he lay lost in a somnolent, half-dreamy state, during which, as a rule, the woman made the fire, and dragged him gently from his last doze by a hum of inquiry and quiet bustle—a sort of music that he liked.

Half an hour went by, and Marianne had not appeared. The Abbé, already half a canon, was about to ring again, when he stayed his hand on hearing a man's step on the stairs. In fact, the Abbé Troubert, after discreetly tapping at the door, at Birotteau's bidding came in. This call did not surprise him; the priests were in the habit of paying each other a visit once a month. The Canon was at once amazed that Marianne should not yet have lighted his quasi-colleague's fire. He opened a window, called Marianne in a rough tone, and bid her come up at once; then, turning

to his brother priest, he said, "If mademoiselle should hear that you have no fire, she would give Marianne a good scolding."

After this speech he inquired for Birotteau's health, and asked him, in an insinuating voice, whether he had any recent news that could encourage his hope of being made a canon. The Abbé explained to him what was being done, and guilelessly told him who the personages were that Mme. de Listomère was canvassing, not knowing that Troubert had never forgiven that lady for not inviting him to her house—him—Canon Troubert, twice designate to be made Vicar-General of the diocese.

It would be impossible to meet with two figures offering so many points of contrast as those of these two priests. Troubert, tall and lean, had a bilious yellow hue, while Birotteau was what is familiarly called crummy. His face, round and florid, spoke of good-nature devoid of ideas; while Troubert's, long and furrowed by deep wrinkles, wore at times an expression of irony and scorn; still, attentive examination was needed to discover these feelings. The Canon was habitually and absolutely placid, his eyelids almost always lowered over a pair of orange-hazel eyes, whose glance was at will very clear and piercing. Red hair completed this countenance, which was constantly clouded under the shroud cast over his features by serious meditations. Several persons had at first supposed him to be absorbed in high and rooted ambition; but those who thought they knew him best had ended by demolishing this opinion, representing him as stultified by Mlle. Gamard's tyranny, or worn by long fasting. He rarely spoke, and never laughed. When he happened to be pleasurably moved, a faint smile appeared and lost itself in the furrows on his cheeks.

Birotteau, on the other hand, was all expansiveness, all openness; he liked titbits, and could be amused by a trifle with the artlessness of a man free from gall and malice. The Abbé Troubert at first sight inspired an involuntary feeling of dread, while the Vicar made everyone who looked at him smile kindly. When the tall Canon stalked solemnly along the cloisters and aisles of Saint-Gatien, his brow bent, his eye stern, he commanded respect; his bowed figure harmonized with the yellow vaulting of the Cathedral; there was something monumental in the folds of his gown, and worthy of the sculptor's art. But the good little Abbé moved without dignity, trotted and pattered, looking as if he rolled along.

And yet the two men had one point of resemblance. While Troubert's ambitious looks, by making the world afraid of him, had perhaps contributed to condemn him to the modest dignity of a mere canon, Birotteau's character and appearance seemed to stamp him forever as no more than a vicaire of the Cathedral. The Abbé Troubert meanwhile, at the age of fifty, by the moderation of his conduct, by the apparently total absence of any ambition in his aims, and by his saintly life, had dispelled the fears his superiors had conceived of his supposed cleverness and his alarming exterior. Indeed, for a year past, his health had been seriously impaired, so that his early promotion to the dignity of Vicar-General to the Archbishop seemed probable. His rivals even hoped for his

appointment, to enable them the more effectually to prepare for their own, during the short span of life that might yet be granted him by a malady that had become chronic. Birotteau's triple chin, far from suggesting the same hopes, displayed to the candidates who were struggling for the canonry all the symptoms of vigorous health, and his gout seemed to them the proverbial assurance of a long life.

The Abbé Chapeloud, a man of great good sense, whose amiability had secured him the friendship of persons in good society and of the various heads of the diocese, had always opposed the elevation of the Abbé Troubert, secretly and with much address; he had even hindered his admission to any of the salons where the best set in Tours were wont to meet, though during his lifetime Troubert always treated him with great respect, and on all occasions showed him the utmost deference. This persistent submissiveness had not availed to change the deceased Canon's opinion; during his last walk with Birotteau, he had said to him once more—

"Do not trust that dry pole Troubert! He is Sixtus V. reduced to the scale of a bishopric."

This was Mlle Gamard's friend and messmate, who, the very day after that on which she had, so to speak, declared war with poor Birotteau, had come to call on him with every mark of friendliness.

"You must excuse Marianne," said Troubert as she came in. "I fancy she did my room first. My place is very damp, and I coughed a great deal during the night.—You are very healthily situated here," he added, looking up at the moldings.

"Oh, I am lodged like a canon!" replied Birotteau with a smile.

"And I like a curate," replied the humble priest.

"Yes, but before long you will be lodged in the Archbishop's Palace," said the good Abbé, who only wanted that everybody should be happy.

"Oh! or in the graveyard. God's will be done!" and Troubert looked up to heaven with a resigned air. "I came," he went on, "to beg you to lend me the *General Clergy List*. No one but you has the book at Tours."

"Take it out of the bookcase," replied Birotteau, reminded by the Canon's last words of all the joys of his life.

The tall priest went into the library, and remained there all the time the Abbé was dressing. Presently the breakfast-bell rang, and Birotteau, reflecting that but for Troubert's visit he would have had no fire to get up by, said to himself, "He is a good man!"

The two priests went down together, each armed with an enormous folio, which they laid on one of the consoles in the dining-room.

"What in the world is that?" asked Mlle. Gamard in sharp tones, addressing Birotteau. "You are not going to lumber up my dining-room with old books, I hope!"

"They are some books I wanted," said the Abbé Troubert. "Monsieur is kind enough to lend them to me."

"I might have guessed that," said she with a scornful smile. "M. Birotteau does not often study such big books."

"And how are you, mademoiselle?" asked the Abbé in a piping voice.

"Why, not at all well," she replied curtly. "You were the cause of my being roused from my first sleep, and I felt the effects all night." And as she seated herself, Mlle. Gamard added, "Gentlemen, the milk will get cold."

Astounded at being so sourly received by his hostess when he expected her to apologize, but frightened, as timid people are, by the prospect of a discussion, especially when they themselves are the subject of it, the poor Abbé took his place in silence. Then, recognizing in Mlle. Gamard's face the obvious symptoms of a bad temper, he sat warring with his common-sense, which advised him not to submit to her want of manners, while his nature prompted him to avoid a quarrel. Birotteau, a prey to this internal struggle, began by seriously studying the broad-green stripes painted on the oilcloth cover, which, from immemorial habit, Mlle. Gamard always left on the table during breakfast, heedless of the frayed edges and scars innumerable that covered this cloth. The two boarders were seated opposite each other, in cane armchairs at each end of the table, a royal square; the place between them being occupied by the landlady, who towered above the table from a chair mounted on runners, padded with cushions, and backing on the dining-room stove. This room and the common sitting-room were on the ground floor, under the Abbé Birotteau's bedroom and drawing-room. When the Abbé had received from Mlle. Gamard his cup of sweetened coffee, he felt chilled by the utter silence in which he was doomed to perform the usually cheerful function of breakfast. He dared not look either at Troubert's expressionless face, nor at the old maid's threatening countenance; so, to do something, he turned to the pug-dog, overburdened with fat, lying near the stove on a cushion whence it never stirred, finding always on the left a little plate of dainties, and on the right a saucer of clean water.

"Well, my pet," said he, "so you want your coffee!"

This personage, one of the most important members of the household, but not a troublesome one, since he never barked now, and left the conversation to his mistress, looked up at Birotteau with little eyes buried in the folds of fat that wrinkled his face. Then he cunningly shut them again.

To give the measure of the priest's discomfiture, it must be explained that, being gifted with a voice and volubility as resonant and meaningless as the sound of an india-rubber ball, he asserted, without being able to give the faculty any reason for his opinion, that speech favored digestion. Mlle. Gamard, who shared this theory of hygiene, had never hitherto failed to converse during meals, notwithstanding their misunderstanding; but now for some few days the Abbé had racked his wits in vain to ask her insidious questions which might loosen her tongue. If the narrow limits to which this story is restricted would allow of a report in full of one of these conversations which always provoked the Abbé Troubert's bitter and sardonic smiles, it would give a perfect picture of the Bœotian existence of provincials. Some clever men might perhaps be even pleased to know

the extraordinary amplitude given by the Abbé Birotteau and Mlle. Gamard to their personal opinions on politics, religion, and literature. There would certainly be some very funny things to tell: such as their reasons, in 1820, for doubting the death of Napoleon, or the conjectures which led them to believe in the survival of Louis XVII., smuggled away in a hollow log of wood. Who would not have laughed to hear them asserting, with arguments peculiarly their own, that the King of France alone spent the money collected in taxes; that the Chambers met to destroy the Clergy; that more than thirteen hundred thousand persons had perished on the scaffold during the Revolution? Then they discussed the press, knowing nothing of how many newspapers were issued, having not the smallest idea of what this modern power is. Finally, M. Birotteau listened respectfully to Mlle. Gamard when she asserted that a man fed on an egg every morning would infalliby die at the end of a year, and that it had been known; that a soft roll eaten without drinking for a few days would cure sciatica; that all the workmen who had been employed in the destruction of the abbey of Saint-Martin had died within six months; that a certain préfet had done his utmost in Bonaparte's time to ruin the towers of Saint-Gatien, and a thousand other absurd stories.

But at the present juncture Birotteau felt his tongue dead within him; so he resigned himself to eating without trying to converse. He soon thought that such silence was perilous to his digestion, and boldly said, "This is excellent coffee!" But the courageous act fell flat.

After looking at the narrow strip of sky above the garden, between the two black buttresses of Saint-Gatien, the Abbé again was brave enough to remark, "It will be finer to-day than it was yesterday."

At this Mlle. Gamard did no more than cast one of her most ingratiating glances at M. Troubert, and then turn her eyes full of terrible severity on Birotteau, who was happily looking down.

No being of the female sex was better able to assume the elegiac attitude of an old maid than Mlle. Sophie Gamard; but to do justice in describing a person whose character will give the greatest interest to the trivial events of this drama, and to the antecedent lives of the figures playing a part in it, it will be well here to epitomize the ideas of which the old maid is the outcome. The habits of life form the soul, and the soul forms the countenance. If in society, as in the universe, everything must have a purpose, there yet are on this earth some existences of which the use and purpose are undiscoverable; morality and political economy alike reject the individual that consumes without producing, that fills a place on earth without diffusing either good or evil—for evil, no doubt, is a form of good of which the results are not immediately manifest. Very rarely does an old maid fail to place herself by her own act in this class of unproductive creatures. Now if the consciousness of work done gives productive beings a sense of satisfaction which helps them to endure life, the knowledge that they are a burden on others, or even merely useless, must

produce the contrary effect, and give to the inert a contempt for themselves as great as that they provoke in others. This stern social reprobation is one of the causes, which, unknown to themselves, contribute to implant in their soul the grievance which is stamped on their faces.

A prejudice, not perhaps without a basis of truth, everywhere gives rise—and in France more than elsewhere—to marked disfavor being felt towards a woman with whom no man has chosen to share his fortunes, or to endure the woes of life. And an age comes to unmarried women when the world, rightly or wrongly, condemns them on the strength of the disdain to which they are victims. If ugly, the amiability of their nature ought to have redeemed the imperfections of their persons; if pretty, their loneliness must have its cause in serious reasons. It is hard to decide which of the two classes is most to be contemned. If their single life is deliberately chosen, if it is a determination to be independent, neither men nor mothers can forgive them for having shirked the sacrifice of woman by refusing to know the passions that make her sex pathetic. To reject its sufferings is to forego its poetry, to cease to deserve the sweet consolations to which a mother has always uncontested rights. Then the generous feelings, the exquisite qualities of woman, can only be developed by constant exercise. When she remains unmarried, a creature of the female sex is a self-contradiction: egoistical and cold, she fills us with horror.

This pitiless verdict is unfortunately too just for old maids to misinterpret its motives. These ideas germinate in their heart as naturally as the effects of their desolate life are imprinted on their features. Thus they wither, because the constant expansion, or the happiness that blooms in a woman's face and lends softness to her movements, has never existed in them. Then they grow harsh and discontented, because a creature that fails of its purpose is unhappy, it suffers, and suffering brings forth viciousness. In fact, before an unmarried woman spites herself for her loneliness, she accuses the whole world, and from accusation there is but one step to the desire for revenge.

Again, the ill grace that disfigures their persons is an inevitable outcome of their life. Never having felt the necessity to please, elegance and good taste are unknown to them. This feeling gradually leads them to choose everything to suit their own convenience at the cost of what might be agreeable to others. Without quite understanding their dissimilarity to other women, at least they observe it and suffer from it. Jealousy is an indelible passion in the female heart. Old maids are jealous for nothing, and know only the woes of the single passion which men can forgive in women because it flatters them. Thus tormented on every side, and compelled to reject the development of their nature, old maids are always conscious of a moral uneasiness to which they never become accustomed. Is it not hard at any age, especially for a woman, to read a feeling of repugnance on every face, when it ought to have been her fate to inspire none but sensations of kindliness in the hearts of those about her? Hence an old maid's glance is

always askance, not so much from modesty as from fear and shame.

Now, it is impossible that a person perpetually at war with herself, or at loggerheads with life, should leave others in peace and never envy their happiness. This world of gloomy ideas lay complete in Mlle. Gamard's dull gray eyes; and the broad, dark circle in which they were set spoke of the long struggles of her solitary life. All the wrinkles on her face were straight lines. The form of her brow, head, and cheeks was characterized by rigidity and hardness. Without heeding them, she left the hairs, once brown, of two or three moles on her chin to grow as they would. Her thin lips scarcely covered her long but sufficiently white teeth. She was dark, and her hair had once been black, but terrible headaches had turned it white. This disaster led her to wear a front; but not knowing how to put it on so as to conceal the junction, there often was a small gap between her cap-border and the black ribbon that fastened this half wig, very carelessly curled. Her gown, of thin silk in summer, of merinos in winter, and always of Carmelite brown, fitted her ungraceful figure and thin arms rather too closely. Her collar, always limp, betrayed a throat whose reddish skin was as finely lined as an oak leaf looked at in the light.

Her parentage accounted for the faults of her figure. She was the daughter of a dealer in fire-logs, a peasant who had risen in the world. At eighteen she might have been fresh and plump, but not a trace was now left either of the white skin or the fine color she boasted of having then had. The hues of her complexion had acquired the dull pallor common enough in very devout persons. An aquiline nose was of all her features that which most strongly expressed the despotism of her ideas, just as the flatness of her forehead revealed her narrowness of mind. Her movements had an odd abruptness bereft of all grace; and only to see her pull her handkerchief out of her bag and loudly blow her nose would have told you what her character and habits were. Fairly tall, she held herself very upright, justifying the remark of a naturalist, who explains the stiffness of old maids physiologically by declaring that all their joints anchylose. She walked so that the motion did not distribute itself equally over her whole person, or produce the graceful undulations that are so attractive in a woman; she moved all of a piece, so to speak, seeming to lift herself at every step, like the statue of the Commendatore. In her moments of good humor she would give it out, as all old maids do, that she could have been married, but that, happily, she had found out her lover's faithlessness in time, and she thus, without knowing it, passed judgment on her heart in favor of her sense of self-interest.

This typical figure of an old maid was suitably set against a background of the grotesque pattern, representing Turkish landscapes, of a satin wall-paper with which the dining-room was hung. Mlle. Gamard habitually occupied this room, ornamented by two consoles and a barometer. In the place occupied by each priest was a little footstool in worsted work of faded hues.

The public sitting-room, where she

received company, was worthy of her. The room will be at once familiar when it is known that it went by the name of the yellow drawing-room; the hangings were yellow, the furniture and wall-paper yellow; on the chimney-shelf, in front of a mirror with a gilt frame, candlesticks and a clock in cut glass reflected a hard glitter to the eye. As to Mlle. Gamard's private sanctum, no one had ever been allowed to enter it. It could only be conjectured that it was full of the odds and ends, the shabby furniture, the rags and tatters, so to speak, which all old maids collect and cling to so fondly.

This was the woman who was destined to exert the greatest influence over the Abbé Birotteau's latter days. Having failed to exercise the energies bestowed on woman in the way intended by nature, and urged by the need of expending them, this old maid had thrown them into the sordid intrigue, the petty tittle-tattle of provincial life, and the selfish scheming which at last exclusively absorbs all old maids.

Birotteau, for his woe, had developed in Sophie Gamard the only feelings this unhappy creature could possibly know, those of hatred; these, till now latent, as a result of the calm monotony of a country-town life, whose horizon was to her more especially narrow, were presently to become all the more intense for being wreaked on small things, and in a narrow sphere of activity. Birotteau was one of those men who are predestined to suffer everything, because, as they never foresee anything, they can avoid nothing; everything falls on them.

"Yes, it will be fine," the Canon replied after a pause, seeming to come out of his meditations and to wish to fulfill the laws of good manners.

Birotteau, frightened at the time that had elapsed between the remark and the reply, since he, for the first time in his life, had swallowed his coffee without speaking, left the dining-room, where his heart was held as in a vise. Feeling his cup of coffee lie heavy on his stomach, he went to walk, sadly enough, up and down the narrow box-edged paths which marked out a star in the garden. But as he turned after his first round, he saw the Abbé Troubert and Mlle. Gamard standing at the glass door of the drawing-room; he with his arms crossed, as motionless as the statue on a tomb, she leaning against the shutter-door. Both, as they watched him, seemed to be counting the number of his steps.

To a timid person there is nothing so distressing as being the object of inquisitive inspection; when it is made by the eyes of hatred, the sort of suffering it inflicts becomes an intolerable martyrdom. Presently the Abbé fancied that he was hindering Mlle. Gamard and the Canon from taking their walk. This notion, inspired alike by fear and by good-nature, acquired such proportions, that he abandoned the place. He went away, already thinking no more of his canonry, so greatly was he worried by the woman's maddening tyranny.

By chance, and happily for him, he was kept very busy at Saint-Gatien, where there were several funerals, a marriage, and two baptisms. This enabled him to forget his troubles. When his appetite warned him of the dinner hour, he took out his watch in some

alarm, seeing that it was some minutes past four. He knew Mlle. Gamard's punctuality, so he hurried home.

He saw the first course brought down again as he passed the kitchen. Then on going into the dining-room, the old maid said to him in a tone of voice which betrayed alike the harshness of a reproof and the glee of finding her boarder in fault, "It is half-past four, M. Birotteau; you knew we should not wait for you."

The priest looked at the dining-room clock, and the arrangement of the gauze wrapper, intended to protect it from dust, showed him that his landlady had wound it in the course of the morning, and had allowed herself the pleasure of setting it faster than the clock of Saint-Gatien's. There was nothing to be said. The least word of suspicion he had conceived would have sprung the most terrible and plausible of those explosions of eloquence which Mlle. Gamard, like all women of her class, could give vent to in such cases.

The thousand-and-one vexations that a maid-servant can inflict on her master, or a wife on her husband, in the daily course of private life, were imagined by Mlle Gamard, who heaped them on her boarder. The way in which she plotted her conspiracies against the poor Abbé's domestic comfort bore the stamp of deeply malignant genius. She contrived never to be in the wrong.

By the end of a week after the opening of this tale, his life in the house, and his position towards Mlle. Gamard, revealed to him a plot, hatching for six months past. So long as the old maid had been covert in her revenge, and the priest could voluntarily keep up his self-deceit, refusing to believe in her malevolent purpose, the moral effects had made no great progress in him. But since the incidents of the displacement of the candlestick and the clock put too fast, Birotteau could no longer doubt that he was living under the rule of an aversion that keep an ever-watchful eye on him. From this he rapidly sank into despair, forever seeing Mlle. Gamard's lean and talon-like fingers ready to claw his heart.

The old maid, happy in living on a sentiment so teeming with excitement as revenge is, delighted in hovering and wheeling above the Abbé as a bird of prey hovers and circles over a field mouse before seizing it. She had long plotted a scheme which the bewildered priest could not possibly guess, and which she soon began to unfold, showing the genius that can be displayed in small things by isolated beings whose soul, incapable of apprehending the grandeur of true piety, has lost itself in the trivialities of devotion. The last and most frightful aggravation of his torments was that the nature of them prohibited Birotteau, an effusive man who loved to be pitied and comforted, from enjoying the little solace of relating them to his friends. The small amount of tact he owed to his shyness made him dread appearing ridiculous by troubling himself about such silly trifles. At the same time, these silly trifles made up his whole life, the life he loved, full of busy vacuity and vacuous business, a dull, gray life, in which too strong a feeling was a misfortune, and the absence of all excitement is happiness. Thus the poor Abbé's paradise had suddenly become

a hell. In short, his torments were intolerable.

The terror with which he contemplated an explanation with Mlle. Gamard grew daily, and the secret misfortunes which blighted every hour of his old age injured his health. One morning, as he put on his speckled blue stockings, he observed that the circumference of his calf had shrunk by eight lines. Appalled at such a terribly unmistakable symptom, he determined to make an effort to persuade the Abbé Troubert to intervene officially between himself and Mlle. Gamard.

When he found himself in the presence of the imposing Canon, who came out of a study crammed with papers, where he was always at work, admitting nobody, to receive him in a bare room, the Abbé was almost ashamed to speak of Mlle. Gamard's petty aggravations to a man who seemed so seriously occupied. But after having suffered all the misery of mental deliberation which humble, weak, or irresolute persons go through, even with regard to trifles, he made up his mind to explain the position to the Canon, not without feeling his heart swollen by extraordinary throbs. Troubert listened with a cold, grave air, trying, but in vain, to control some smiles, which, to intelligent eyes, might have betrayed the satisfaction of a secret desire. A flash sparkled in his eye when Birotteau described to him, with the eloquence lent by true emotion, the bitterness that was incessantly poured out for him; but Troubert at once covered his eyes with his hand, a gesture common to great thinkers, and preserved his habitually dignified attitude.

When the Abbé ceased speaking, he would have been puzzled indeed if he had tried to read any sign of the feelings he imagined he should excite in this mysterious priest, on his face, mottled now with yellow patches—yellower than even his usual bilious complexion. After a moment's silence, the Canon made one of those replies of which every word must have been carefully studied to give them their full bearing, but which subsequently showed to capable persons the amazing depth of his mind and the power of his intellect.

He finally crushed Birotteau by saying that all these things surprised him the more, because, but for his brother's explanation, he would never have discerned them. He ascribed this dullness of perception to his important occupations, to his work, and to the supremacy of certain lofty thoughts, which did not allow of his heeding the trivialities of life. He pointed out, but without assuming the airs of wishing to censure the conduct of a man whose years and learning commanded his respect, that "the hermits of old rarely thought about their food, or their dwelling in the deserts, where they gave themselves up to holy contemplation," and that "in our days the priest could, in mind, make a desert for himself in every place." Then, returning to Birotteau, he remarked that "such squabbles were a quite new thing to him. During twelve years nothing of the kind had ever arisen between Mlle. Gamard and the venerated Abbé Chapeloud. As for himself, he could, no doubt, act as moderator between the priest and their landlady, since his friendship for her

did not overstep the limits imposed by the laws of the Church on its faithful ministers; but then justice would require that he should also hear Mlle. Gamard. At the same time, he discerned no change in her; he had always seen her thus; he had willingly yielded to some of her vagaries, knowing that the excellent woman was kindness and sweetness itself; these little caprices of temper were to be ascribed to the sufferings caused by a pulmonary trouble, of which she never spoke, resigning herself to it as a true Christian." He ended by saying that "when he should have lived a few years longer with mademoiselle, he would appreciate her better, and recognize the beauties of her admirable character."

The Abbé Birotteau came away bewildered. Under the absolute necessity of taking counsel with himself alone, he gauged Mlle. Gamard by himself. The poor man thought that by absenting himself for a few days this woman's hatred would burn itself out for lack of fuel. So he determined to go, as he had done before now, to spend some time at a country place where Mme. de Listomère always went at the end of the autumn, a season when, in Touraine, the sky is usually clear and mild. Poor man! He was thus carrying out the secret wishes of his terrible enemy, whose schemes could not be thwarted by anything short of monk-like endurance; while he, guessing nothing, and not knowing his own business even, was doomed to fall like a lamb under the first blow from the butcher.

Lying on the slope between the town of Tours and the heights of Saint-Georges, facing the south, and sheltered by cliffs, Mme. de Listomère's estate combined all the charms of the country with the pleasures of the town. It was not more than a ten-minutes' drive from the Bridge of Tours to the gate of this house, known as l'Alouette (the Lark)—an immense convenience in a place where no one will disturb himself for any earthly thing, not even in quest of pleasure.

The Abbé Birotteau had been about ten days at l'Alouette, when one morning, at the breakfast hour, the lodge-keeper came to tell him that M. Caron wished to speak with him. M. Caron was a lawyer employed by Mlle. Gamard. Birotteau, not remembering this, and conscious of no litigious difficulty to be settled with anybody in the world, left the table, not without some anxiety, to meet the lawyer; he found him sitting modestly on the parapet of a terrace.

"Your intention of remaining no longer as a resident under Mlle. Gamard's roof being now quite evident——" the man of business began.

"Dear me, monsieur!" cried Birotteau, interrupting him, "I never thought of leaving her."

"And yet, monsieur," the lawyer went on, "you must certainly have expressed yourself to that effect to mademoiselle, since she has sent me to inquire whether you intend remaining long in the country. The event of a prolonged absence not having been provided for in your agreement, might give rise to some discussion. Now, as Mlle. Gamard understands it, your board——"

"Monsieur," said Birotteau in surprise, and again interrupting the lawyer,

"I did not think it could be necessary to take steps, almost legal in their nature, to——"

"Mlle. Gamard, wishing to preclude any difficulty," said M. Caron, "has sent me to come to an understanding with you."

"Very well, if you will be so obliging as to call again to-morrow, I, on my part, will have taken advice."

"So be it," said Caron with a how.

The scrivener withdrew. The hapless priest, appalled by the pertinacity of Mlle. Gamard's persecution, went back to Mme. de Listomère's dining-room looking quite upset. At his mere appearance everyone asked him, "Why, M. Birotteau, what is the matter?"

The Abbé, greatly distressed, sat down without answering, so overwhelmed was he by the vague vision of his misfortune. But after breakfast, when several of his friends had gathered round a good fire in the drawing-room, Birotteau artlessly told them the tale of his catastrophe. The hearers, who were just beginning to be bored by their stay in the country, were deeply interested in an intrigue so completely in keeping with provincial life. Everybody took the Abbé's part against the old maid.

"Why!" cried Mme. Listomère, "do you not plainly see that the Abbé Troubert wants your rooms?"

In this place the historian would have a right to sketch this lady's portrait; but it occurs to him that even those persons to whom Sterne's cognomology is unknown could surely not utter the three words Mme. de Listomère, without seeing her—noble and dignified, tempering the austerity of piety by the antique elegance of monarchical and classic manners and polite distinction; kind, but a little formal; speaking slightly through her nose; allowing herself to read *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, and to go to the play; still wearing her own hair.

"The Abbè Birotteau must certainly not yield to that nagging old woman!" cried M. de Listomère, a lieutenant in the navy, spending a holiday with his aunt. "If the Abbé has any courage, and will follow my advice, he will soon have recovered his peace of mind."

In short, everybody began to analyze Mlle. Gamard's proceedings with the acumen peculiar to provincials, who, it certainly cannot be denied, possess the talent of laying bare the most secret human actions.

"You have not hit the mark," said an old landowner who knew the country. "There is something very serious under this which I have not yet mastered The Abbé Troubert is far too deep to be so easily seen through. Our good friend Birotteau is only at the beginning of his troubles. In the first place, would he be happy and left in peace even if he gave up his rooms to Troubert? I doubt it.—If Caron came to tell you," he went on, turning to the puzzled Abbé, "that you had intended to leave Mlle. Gamard, with the object of getting you out of her house . . . Well, you will have to go, willy-nilly. That kind of man never risks a chance; they only play when they hold the trumps."

This old gentleman, a certain M. de Bourbonne, epitomized provincial ideas as completely as Voltaire epitomized the spirit of his time. This withered little old man professed in matters of dress

all the indifference of a proprietor whose estate has a quotable value in the department. His countenance, tanned by the sun of Touraine, was shrewd rather than clever. He was accustomed to weigh his words, to consider his actions, and he concealed his deep caution under a delusive bluntness. The very least observation was enough to discover that, like a Norman peasant, he would get the advantage in every stroke of business. He was great in œnology—the favorite science of the Tourangeaux. He had managed to extend the circle of one of his estates by taking in the alluvial land of the Loire without getting into a lawsuit with the State. This achievement had established his reputation as a clever man. If, charmed by M. de Bourbonne's conversation, you had asked his biography of one of his fellow provincials, "Oh! he is a cunning old fox," would have been the proverbial reply of all who envied him, and they were many. In Touraine, as in most provinces, jealousy lies at the base of the tongue.

M. de Bourbonne's remark caused a brief silence, during which the members of this little committee seemed lost in thought.

At this juncture Mlle. Salomon de Villenoix was announced. She had just come from Tours, prompted by her wish to be of service to Birotteau, and the news she brought completely changed the aspect of affairs. At the moment when she came in, everyone but the landowner was advising Birotteau to hold his own against Troubert and Gamard, under the auspices of the aristocratic party, who would support him.

"The Vicar-General," said Mlle. Salomon, "who has all the promotions in his hands, has just been taken ill, and the Archbishop has commissioned Canon Troubert to act in his place. The nomination to the canonry now depends entirely on him. Now yesterday, at Mlle. de la Blottière's, the Abbé Poirel was speaking of the annoyances M. Birotteau occasioned to Mlle. Gamard, in such a way as to seem to justify the neglect which will certainly fall on our good Abbé. 'The Abbé Birotteau is a man who badly needed the Abbé Chapeloud,' said he, 'and since that virtuous Canon's death it has been proved that——' Then came a series of suppositions and calumnies.—You understand?"

"Troubert will be made Vicar-General," said M. de Bourbonne solemnly.

"Come, now," cried Mme. de Listomère, looking at Birotteau, "which would you prefer—to be made Canon, or to remain with Mlle. Gamard?"

"To be made Canon," was the general outcry.

"Well, then," Mme. de Listomère went on, "the Abbé Troubert and Mlle. Gamard must be allowed to have their way. Have they not conveyed to you indirectly by Caron's visit that, provided you consent to leave your rooms, you shall be made Canon. One good turn for another."

Everyone exclaimed at Mme. de Listomère's acumen and sagcity; but her nephew, the Baron de Listomère, said in a comical tone to M. de Bourbonne—

"I should have liked to see the battle between the *Gamard* and the *Birotteau*."

But, for the Abbé's worse luck, the forces were not equal, with the wordly-wise on one side, and the old maid up-

held by the Abbé Troubert on the other. The time was at hand when the struggle would become more decisive, and assume a greater scope and immense proportions.

By the advice of Mme. de Listomère and most of her adherents, who were beginning to take a passionate interest in this intrigue flung into the vacuity of their country life, a footman was dispatched for M. Caron. The lawyer returned with amazing promptitude, a fact that alarmed no one but M. de Bourbonne.

"Let us adjourn any decision till we have fuller information," was the advice of this Fabius in a dressing-gown, whose deep reflections revealed to him some abstruse plan of battle on the Tours chessboard.

He tried to enlighten Birotteau as to the perils of his position. But the "old fox's" shrewdness did not subserve the frenzy of the moment; he was scarcely listened to.

The meeting between the lawyer and Birotteau was brief. The Abbé came in looking quite scared, and saying, "He requires me to sign a paper declaring may decession."

"What barbarous word is that?" said the navy lieutenant.

"And what does it mean?" cried Mme. de Listomère.

"It simply means that the Abbé is to declare his readiness to leave Mlle. Gamard's house," replied M. de Bourbonne, taking a pinch of snuff.

"Is that all?—Sign it!" said Mme. de Listomère to Birotteau. "If you have really made up your mind to quit her house, there can be no harm done by declaring your will."—The *Will* of Birotteau!

"That is true," said M. de Bourbonne, shutting his snuff-box with a dry snap, of which it is impossible to render the full meaning, for it was a language by itself. "But writing is always dangerous," he added, placing the snuff-box on the chimney-shelf with a look that terrified the Abbé.

Birotteau was so bewildered by the upheaval of all his ideas, by the swiftness of events which had come on him and found him defenseless, and by the lightness with which his friends treated the most cherished circumstances of his lonely life, that he remained motionless, as if lost in the moon, not thinking of anything, but listening and trying to catch the sense of the hasty words everybody else was so ready with. He took up M. Caron's document, and read it as though the lawyer's deed were in fact the object of his attention; but it was merely mechanical, and he signed the paper by which he declared himself ready and willing to give up his residence with Mlle. Gamard as well as his board, as provided by the agreement between them. When Birotteau had signed the deed Caron took it, and asked him where his client was to bestow the goods and chattels belonging to him. Birotteau mentioned Mme. de Listomère's house, and the lady by a nod consented to receive the Abbé for some days, never doubting but that he would ere long be made a canon. The old landowner wished to see this sort of act of renunciation, and M. Caron handed it to him.

"Why," said he to the Abbé, after having read it, "is there any written

agreement between you and Mlle. Gamard? Where is it? What are the conditions?"

"The paper is in my rooms," said Birotteau.

"Do you know its contents?" the old gentleman asked the lawyer.

"No, monsieur," said M. Caron, holding out his hand for the ominous document.

"Ah, ha!" said M. de Bourbonne to himself, "you, master lawyer, are no doubt informed of what that agreement contains, but you are not paid to tell us." And he returned the deed of "decession" to the lawyer.

"Where am I to put all my furniture?" cried Birotteau, "and my books, my beautiful library, my nice pictures, my red drawing-room—all my things, in short!"

And the poor man's despair at finding himself thus uprooted was so guileless, it so perfectly showed the purity of his life, and his ignorance of the world, that Mme. de Listomère and Mlle. Salomon said, to comfort him, and in the tone that mothers use when they promise a child a plaything—

"There, there, do not worry yourself about such silly trifles. We shall easily find you a home less cold and gloomy than Mlle. Gamard's house. If no lodging is to be found to suit you—well, one of us will take you as a boarder. Come, play a hit at backgammon. You can call on the Abbé Troubert to-morrow to ask his support, and you will see how well he will receive you."

Weak-minded persons are reassured as easily as they are frightened. So poor Birotteau, dazzled by the prospect of living with Mme. de Listomère, forgot the ruin, now irremediably complete, of the happiness he had so long sighed for, and so thoroughly reveled in. Still, at night, before falling asleep, with the anguish of a man to whom a removal, and the formation of new habits, were as the end of the world, he tortured his mind to imagine where he could find as convenient a home for his library as that corridor. As he pictured his books astray, his furniture dispersed, and his home broken up, he wondered a thousand times why his first year at Mlle. Gamard's had been so delightful, and the second so wretched. And again and again this disaster was a bottomless pit in which his mind was lost.

The canonry no longer seemed to him a sufficient compensation for so many misfortunes; he compared his life to a stocking in which one dropped stitch leads to a ladder all the way down the web. Mlle. Salomon was left to him. But, losing all his old illusions, the poor priest no longer dared believe in a new friend.

In the *città dolente* of old maids there are several, especially in France, whose life is a sacrifice nobdy renewed day by day to noble feeling. Some remain proudly faithful to a heart which death untimely snatched from them; martyrs to love, they learn the secret of womanliness of soul. Others succumb to a family pride which, to our shame, is daily waxing less; they have devoted themselves to make the fortune of a brother, or to the care of orphan nephews; such women are mothers though remaining maids. These old maids rise to the highest heroism of their sex, by consecrating every womanly

feeling to the worship of misfortune. They idealize the concept of woman, by renouncing all the rewards of her natural destiny, and accepting only its penalties. They live enshrined in the beauty of their self-sacrifice, and men reverently bow their heads before their faded forms. Mlle. de Sombreuil is neither wife nor maid; she was, and always will be, an embodied poem.

Mlle. Salomon was one of these heroic creatures. Her sacrifice was religiously sublime, inasmuch as it would remain inglorious after having been a daily anguish. Young and handsome, she was loved; her lover lost his reason. For five years she had devoted herself with the courage of love to the mechanical joys of the unhappy man; she was so fully wedded to his madness that she did not think him mad.

She was a woman of simple manners, frank in speech, with a pale face not devoid of character, though the features were regular. She never spoke of the experiences of her life. Only, now and then, the sudden shudder with which she heard the narrative of some dreadful or melancholy incident betrayed in her the fine qualities evolved by great sorrows. She had come to live at Tours after the death of her companion in life. There she could not be appreciated at her true value; she was regarded as a "good creature." She was very charitable, and attached herself by preference to the weak and helpless. For this reason she had, of course, the deepest interest in the unhappy priest.

Mlle. Salomon de Villenoix, driving into town early next morning, took Birotteau with her, set him down on the Cathedral quay, and left him making his way towards the Close, where he was in great haste to arrive, to save the canonry, at any rate, from the shipwreck, and to superintend the removal of his furniture. He rang, not without violent palpitations, at the door of the house, whither for fourteen years he had been in the habit of coming, in which he had dwelt, and whence he was now to be forever exiled after dreaming that he might die there in peace like his friend Chapeloud.

Marianne was surprised to see him. He told her he had come to speak to M. Troubert, and turned towards the ground-floor rooms in which the Canon lodged; but Marianne called out to him—

"The Abbé Troubert is not there, M. le Vicaire; he is in your old rooms."

These words were a fearful shock to Birotteau, who at last understood Troubert's character, and the unfathomable depth of revenge so slowly worked out, when he saw him quite at home in Chapeloud's library, seated in Chapeloud's fine Gothic chair—sleeping, no doubt, in Chapeloud's bed, using Chapeloud's furniture, contravening Chapeloud's will, in short, disinheriting Chapeloud's friends;—that very Chapeloud who had for so long penned him in at Mlle. Gamard's, hindered his advancement, and kept him out of the drawing-rooms of Tours. By what magic wand had this transformation been effected? Where these things no longer Birotteau's?

Indeed, as he noted the sardonic expression with which Troubert looked round on this library, Birotteau inferred that the future Vicar-General was secure of possessing forever the plunder of the

two men he had so bitterly hated—Chapeloud as an enemy, and Birotteau because in him he still saw Chapeloud. At the sight a thousand ideas surged up in the worthy man's heart and wrapped him in a sort of trance. He stood motionless, and, as it were, fascinated by Troubert's eye, which was fixed on him.

"I cannot suppose, monsieur," said Birotteau at last, "that you would wish to deprive me of the things that are mine. Though Mlle. Gamard may have been impatient to move you, she must surely be just enough to allow me time to identify my books and remove my furniture."

"Monsieur," said the Canon coldly, and betraying no sort of feeling in his face, "Mlle. Gamard told me yesterday that you were leaving; of the cause of it I know nothing. If she moved me up here, it was because she was obliged to do so. M. l'Abbé Poirel has taken my rooms. Whether the furniture in these rooms belongs to mademoiselle, I know not. If it is yours, you know her perfect honesty; the saintliness of her life is a guarantee for it.

"As to myself, you know how plainly I live. For fifteen years I slept in a bare room, never heeding the damp, which is killing me by inches. At the same time, if you wish to return to these rooms, I am ready to give them up to you."

As he listened to this terrible speech, Birotteau forgot the matter of the canonry; he went downstairs as briskly as a young man to find Mlle. Gamard, and met her at the bottom of the stairs in the large paved passage which joined the two parts of the house.

"Mademoiselle," said he, bowing, and not heeding the sour, sardonic smile that curled her lips, or the extraordinary fire that gave her eyes a glare like a tiger's, "I cannot understand why you did not wait till I had removed my furniture before——"

"What!" she exclaimed, interrupting him, "have not all your things been taken to Mme. de Listomère's?"

"But my furniture?"

"Did you never read your agreement?" cried she, in tones which ought to be expressed in musical notation to show how many shades hatred could infuse into the accentuation of every word.

And Mlle. Gamard seemed to swell, her eyes flashed once more, and her face beamed; her whole person thrilled with satisfaction.

The Abbé Troubert opened a window to see better to read a folio volume.

Birotteau stood as if thunderstricken.

Mlle. Gamard trumpeted at him, in a voice as shrill as a clarion, the following words:—

"Was it not agreed that, in the event of your leaving my house, your furniture was to become mine to indemnify me for the difference between what you paid me for your board, and what I received from the late respectable Abbé Chapeloud? Now, as M. l'Abbé Poirel has been made Canon——"

At these last words Birotteau bowed slightly as if to take leave; then he rushed out of the house. He was afraid lest, if he stayed any longer, he should faint, and so give his relentless foes a too great triumph. Walking like a drunken man, he got back to Mme. de Listomère's town house, where, in a lower room, he found his linen, clothes, and papers all packed into a trunk. At the sight of those relics of his property,

the unhappy priest sat down and hid his face in his hands to hide his tears from the sight of men. The Abbé Poirel was Canon! He, Birotteau, found himself homeless, bereft of fortune and furniture.

Happily, Mlle. Salomon happened to drive past. The doorkeeper, understanding the poor man's despair, signaled to the coachman. After a few words of explanation between the lady and the porter, the Abbé allowed himself to be led to his faithful friend, though he could only answer her in incoherent words. Mlle. Salomon, alarmed by the temporary derangement of a brain already so feeble, carried him at once to l'Alouette, ascribing these symptoms of mental disturbance to the effect naturally produced on him by the Abbé Poirel's promotion. She knew nothing of the hapless priest's agreement with Mlle. Gamard, for the excellent reason that he himself did not know its full bearing. And as it is in the nature of things that comedy is often mixed up with the most pathetic incidents, Birotteau's bewildered answers almost made Mlle. Salomon laugh.

"Chapeloud was right," said he; "he is a monster."

"Who?" said she.

"Chapeloud. He has robbed me of everything."

"Then you mean Poirel?"

"No, Troubert."

At length they reached l'Alouette, where the priest's friends lavished on him such effusive kindness, that by the evening he grew calmer, and they could extract from him an account of all that had occurred that morning.

M. de Bourbonne, always phlegmatic, naturally asked to see the agreement which ever since the day before had seemed to him to contain the key to the riddle. Birotteau brought the fatal document out of his pocket, and held it out to the landowner, who read it hastily, presently coming to a sentence in these terms:—

"Whereas there is a difference of eight hundred francs a year between the price paid by the late M. Chapeloud and the sum for which the aforenamed Sophie Gamard agrees to lodge and board, on the terms hereinbefore stated, the said François Birotteau; whereas the said François Birotteau fully acknowledges that it is out of his power for some years to come to pay the full price paid by Mlle. Gamard's boarders, and more especially by the Abbé Troubert; and, finally, whereas the said Sophie Gamard has advanced certain sums of money, the said Birotteau hereby pledges himself to bequeath to her, as an indemnity, the furniture of which he may be possessed at the time of his decease; or in the event of his voluntarily departing, for whatever cause or reason, and quitting the premises at present let to him, and no longer availing himself of the benefits contracted for in the agreement made by Mlle. Gamard hereinbefore——"

"Heaven above us! What impudence!" exclaimed M. de Bourbonne. "And what claws the said Sophie Gamard has!"

Poor Birotteau, never conceiving in his childish brain of any cause which could ever separate him from Mlle. Gamard, had counted on dying under her roof. He had not the least recollection of this clause, of which the terms had not even been discussed at the time when, in his eagerness to lodge with the

old maid, he would have signed all the documents she might have chosen to lay before him. His innocence was so creditable, and Mlle. Gamard's conduct so atrocious; there was something so deplorable in the fate of this hapless sexagenarian, and his weakness made him so pitiable, that in a first impulse of indignation Mme. de Listomère exclaimed, "I am the cause of your having signed the act that has ruined you; I ought to make up to you for the comfort you have lost."

"But," said M. de Bourbonne, "such proceedings constitute a fraud; there are grounds for an action——"

"Good, Birotteau shall bring an action. If he loses it at Tours, he will win it at Orleans; if he loses it at Orleans, he will win it at Paris!" cried the Baron de Listomère.

"If he means to bring an action, I should advise him first to resign his benefice in the Cathedral," said M. de Bourbonne calmly.

"We will take legal advice," replied Mme. de Listomère; "and we will bring an action if we ought. But this business is so disgraceful for Mlle. Gamard, and may prove so damaging to the Abbé Troubert, that we can surely effect a compromise."

After mature deliberation, everybody promised to assist the Abbé Birotteau in the struggle that must ensue between him and the allies of his enemies. A confident presentiment, an indescribable provincial instinct prompted everyone to combine the names of Troubert and Gamard. But not a soul of those then assembled at Mme. de Listomère's, excepting the "old fox," had any accurate notion of the importance of such a conflict.

M. de Bourbonne took the poor priest into a corner.

"Of all the fourteen persons present," said he in a low voice, "not one will be still on your side within a fortnight. If you then want to call in help, you will perhaps find no one but myself bold enough to undertake your defense, because I know the country, men, and things, and, better still, their interests. All your friends here, though full of good intentions, are starting on the wrong road, which you can never get out of. Listen to my advice. If you want to live in peace, give up your office in Saint-Gatien and leave Tours. Tell no one where you go, but seek a cure of souls far from hence, where Troubert can never again come across you."

"Leave Tours!" cried the Abbé, with unspeakable dismay.

It was to him a form of death. Was it not tearing up all the roots by which he held to the world? Celibates make habits take the place of feelings. And when to this system of ideas, by which they go through life rather than live, they add a weak nature, external things have an astonishing dominion over them. Birotteau had really become a sort of vegetable; to transplant it was to endanger its guileless functions. Just as a tree, in order to live, must always find the same juices at hand, and always send its filaments into the same soil, so Birotteau must always patter round Saint-Gatien, always trot up and down the spot on the Mall where he was wont to walk, always go through the same familiar streets, and constantly frequent

the three drawing-rooms where evening after evening he played whist or backgammon.

"To be sure—I was not thinking," replied M. de Bourbonne, looking compassionately at the priest.

Before long all Tours knew that Mme. la Baronne de Listomère, widow of a Lieutenant-General, had given a home to the Abbé Birotteau, Vicaire of Saint-Gatien. This fact, on which several persons threw doubts, cut short all questions, and gave definiteness to party divisions, especially when Mlle. Salomon was the first to dare speak of fraud and an action at law.

Mlle. Gamard, with the subtle vanity and the fanatical sense of personal importance that are characteristic of old maids, considered herself greatly aggrieved by the line of conduct taken by Mme. de Listomère. The Baroness was a woman of high rank, elegant in her habits, whose good taste, polished manners, and genuine piety were beyond dispute. By sheltering Birotteau she formally gave the lie to all Mlle. Gamard's asseverations, indirectly censured her conduct, and seemed to sanction the Abbé's complaints of his former landlady.

For the better comprehension of this story, it is necessary here to explain how much power Mlle. Gamard derived from the discernment and analytical spirit with which old women can account to themselves for the actions of others, and to set forth the resources of her faction. Escorted by the always taciturn Abbé Troubert, she spent her evenings in four or five houses where a dozen persons were wont to meet, allied by common tastes and analogous circumstances. There were two or three old men, wedded to the whims and tittle-tattle of their cooks; five or six old maids, who spent their days in sifting the words and scrutinizing the proceedings of their neighbors and those a little below them in the social scale; and finally, several old women wholly occupied in distilling scandal, in keeping an exact register of everybody's fortune, and a check on everybody's actions. They foretold marriages, and blamed their friends' conduct quite as harshly as their enemies'. These persons, filling in the town a position analogous to the capillary vessels of a plant, imbibed news with the thirst of a leaf for the dew, picked up the secrets of every household, discharged them and transmitted them mechanically to M. Troubert, as leaves communicate to the plant the moisture they have absorbed. Thus, every evening of the week, these worthy bigots, prompted by the craving for excitement which exists in everyone, struck an accurate balance of the position of the town with a sagacity worthy of the Council of Ten, and made an armed police out of the unerring espionage to which our passions give rise. Then, as soon as they had found the secret motive of any event, their conceit led them to appropriate, severally, the wisdom of their Sanhedrim, and to give importance to their gossip in their respective circles.

This idle and busybody assembly, invisible though omniscient, speechless but forever talking, had at that time an influence which was apparently harmless in view of its contemptibility, but which nevertheless could be terrible when it was animated by a strong motive. Now

it was a very long time since any event had occurred within range of their lives to compare in general importance to each and all with the contest between Birotteau, supported by Mme. de Listomère, and the Abbé Troubert with Mlle. Gamard. In fact, the three drawing-rooms of Mme. de Listomère, Mlle. Merlin de la Blottière, and Mlle. de Villenoix, being regarded as a hostile camp by those where Mlle. Gamard visited, there lay behind this quarrel a strong party spirit with all its vanities. It was the struggle of the Roman Senate and people in a molehill, or a tempest in a glass of water, as Montesquieu said in speaking of the Republic of San-Marino, where public officials held their places but a day, so easy it was to seize despotic power.

But this storm in a teacup evolved as many passions in the actors as would have sufficed to direct the largest social interests. Is it not a mistake to suppose that time flies swiftly only to those whose hearts are a prey to such vast projects as trouble life and make it boil? The Abbé Troubert's hours were spent as busily, flew loaded with thoughts as anxious, and marked by despair and hopes as deep, as could the racking hours of the man of ambition, the gamester, or the lover. God alone knows the secret of the energy we put forth to win the occult triumphs we achieve over men, or things, or ourselves. Though we do not always know whither we are going, we know full well the fatigues of the voyage. Still, if the historian may be allowed to digress from the drama he is narrating, to assume for a moment the functions of the critic—if he may invite you to glance at the lives of these old maids and of these two priests, to investigate the causes of the misfortune which vitiated their inmost core—you will perhaps find it proved to a demonstration that man must necessarily experience certain passions if he is to evolve those qualities which give nobleness to life, which expand its limits and silence the selfishness natural to all beings.

Mme. de Listomère returned to town, not knowing that for five or six days past several of her friends had been obliged to dispute a rumor concerning herself, and accepted by some, though she would have laughed at it had she heard of it, which attributed her affection for her nephew to almost criminal causes.

She took the Abbé to see her lawyer, who did not think an action an easy matter. The Abbé's friends, confident in the feeling that comes of the justice of a good case, or else dilatory about proceedings which did not concern them personally, had postponed the preliminary inquiry till the day when they should return to Tours. Thus Mlle. Gamard's allies had been able to make the first move, and had told the story in a way unfavorable to the Abbé Birotteau. Hence the man of law, whose clients consisted exclusively of the pious folks of the town, very much astonished Mme. de Listomère by urging her on no account to be mixed up in such proceedings; and he closed the interview by saying that "he, at any rate, would not undertake the case, because, by the terms of the agreement, Mlle. Gamard was right in the eye of the law; that in equity, that is to say, out of the jurisdiction of the Court, M. Birotteau would

appear in the eyes of the Bench and of all honest folks to have fallen away from the meek, peace-loving, and conciliatory character he had hitherto enjoyed; that Mlle. Gamard, regarded as a gentle person and easy to live with, had accommodated Birotteau by lending the money needed to pay the succession duties arising from Chapeloud's bequest, without demanding any receipt; that Birotteau was not of an age, nor of a nature, to sign a document without knowing what it contained and recognizing its importance; and that as he had ceased to live at Mlle. Gamard's after only two years' residence, whereas his friend Chapeloud had been with her for twelve years, and Troubert for fifteen, it could only be in accordance with some plan best known to himself. That, consequently, the action would be generally considered as an act of ingratitude," etc.

After seeing Birotteau to the head of the stairs, the lawyer detained Mme. de Listomère a moment as he showed her out, and besought her, as she loved her peace of mind, to have nothing to do with the affair.

In the evening, however, the hapless Abbé, as miserable as a criminal in the condemned cell at Bicêtre while awaiting the result of his petition to the court of appeal, could not keep himself from telling his friends of the result of his visit to the lawyer, at the hour before the card-parties were made up, when the little circle were assembling round Mme. de Listomère's fire.

"I know no lawyer in Tours, excepting the solicitor for the Liberal party, who would undertake the case, unless he meant to lose it," exclaimed M. de Bourbonne, "and I do not advise you to embark on it."

"Well, it is a rascally shame!" said the navy lieutenant. "I myself will take the Abbé to see that lawyer!"

"Then go after dark," said M. de Bourbonne, interrupting him.

"Why?"

"I have just heard that the Abbé Troubert is appointed Vicar-General in the place of him who died the day before yesterday."

"Much I care for the Abbé Troubert!"

Unluckily, the Baron de Listomère, a man of six-and-thirty, did not see the sign made to him by M. de Bourbonne warning him to weigh his words, and pointing significantly at a town councilor who was known to be a friend of Troubert's. So the officer went on—

"If M. Troubert is a rogue . . ."

"Dear me," said M. de Bourbonne, "why bring the Abbé Troubert's name into a matter with which he has no concern whatever?"

"Nay," said the lieutenant, "is he not in the enjoyment of the Abbé Birotteau's furniture? I remember having called on M. Chapeloud and seeing two valuable pictures. Suppose they are worth ten thousand francs? Can you believe that M. Birotteau ever intended to give, in return for two years' board with this Gamard woman, ten thousand francs, when the library and furniture are worth almost as much more?"

The Abbé opened his eyes very wide on hearing that he had ever owned such an enormous fortune. And the Baron went on vehemently to the end.

"By Jove! M. Salomon, an expert from the Paris gallery, happens to be here on a visit to his mother-in-law. I will

go to him this very evening with M. l'Abbé, and beg him to value the pictures. From thence I will take him to that lawyer."

Two days after this conversation the action had taken shape. The solicitor to the Liberal party, now Birotteau's attorney, cast some obloquy on the Abbé's case. The Opposition to the Government, and some persons known to love neither priests nor religion—two things which many people fail to distinguish—took up the matter, and the whole town was talking of it. The expert from Paris had valued the *Virgin* by le Valentin, and the *Christ* by Lebrun, at eleven thousand francs; they were both choice examples. As to the bookcase and the Gothic furniture, the fashionable taste, daily growing in Paris, for that style of work gave them an immediate value of twelve thousand francs. In short, the expert, on examination, estimated the contents of the rooms at ten thousand crowns.

Now, it was obvious that as Birotteau had never intended to give Mlle. Gamard this immense sum in payment of the little money he might owe her in virtue of the stipulated indemnity, there were grounds, legally speaking, for a new contract, otherwise the old maid would be guilty of unintentional fraud. So the lawyer on Birotteau's behalf began by serving a writ on Mlle. Gamard, formulating the Abbé's case. This statement, though exceedingly severe, and supported by quotations from leading judgments, and confirmed by certain articles of the Code, was at the same time a masterpiece of legal logic, and so evidently condemned the old maid, that thirty or forty copies were maliciously circulated in the town by the opposite party.

A few days after this commencement of hostilities between the old maid and Birotteau, the Baron de Listomère, who, as commander of a corvette, hoped to be included in the next list of promotions, which had been expected for some time at the Navy Board, received a letter, in which a friend informed him that there was, on the contrary, some idea in the office of placing him on the Retired List. Greatly amazed by this news, he at once set out for Paris, and appeared at the Minister's next reception. This official himself seemed no less surprised, and even laughed at the fears expressed by the Baron de Listomère.

Next day, in spite of the Minister's words, the Baron inquired at the office. With an indiscretion, such as is not infrequently committed by heads of departments for their friends, a secretary showed him a minute confirming the fatal news, ready drawn up, but which had not yet been submitted to the Minister, in consequence of the illness of a head clerk. The Baron at once went to call on an uncle, who, being a député, could without delay meet the Minister at the Chamber, and begged him to sound his Excellency as to his views, since to him this meant the sacrifice of his whole career. He awaited the closing of the sitting in his uncle's carriage in the greatest anxiety.

Long before the end his uncle came out, and as they drove home to his house he asked the Baron—

"What the devil led you to make war against the priesthood? The Minister told me at once that you had put yourself at the head of the Liberal party at

Tours. Your opinions are detestable, you do not follow the line laid down by the Government, and what not! His phrases were as confused as if he were still addressing the Chamber. So then I said to him, 'Come, let us understand each other.' And his Excellency ended by confessing that you were in a scrape with the Lord High Almoner. In short, by making some inquiries among my colleagues, I learnt that you had spoken with much levity of a certain Abbé Troubert who, though but a Vicar-General, is the most important personage of the province, where he represents the ecclesiastical power. I answered for you to the Minister in person.—My noble nephew, if you want to get on in the world, make no enemies in the Church.

"Now, go back to Tours, and make your peace with this devil of a Vicar-General. Remember that Vicars-General are men with whom you must always live in peace. Deuce take it! When we are all trying to re-establish the Church, to cast discredit on the priests is a blunder in a ship's lieutenant who wants his promotion. If you do not make it up with this Abbé Troubert, you need not look to me; I shall cast you off. The Minister for Church affairs spoke to me of the man just now as certain to be a Bishop. If Troubert took an aversion for our family, he might hinder my name from appearing in the next batch of peers.—Do you understand?"

This speech explained to the navy lieutenant what Troubert's secret occupations were, when Birotteau so stupidly remarked, "I cannot think what good he gains by sitting up all night!"

The Canon's position, in the midst of the feminine senate which so craftily kept a surveillance over the province, as well as his personal capabilities, had led to his being chosen by the Church authorities from among all the priests in the town to be the unacknowledged proconsul of Touraine. Archbishop, General, Préfet—high and low were under his occult dominion.

The Baron de Listomère had soon made up his mind.

"I have no notion," said he to his uncle, "of receiving another ecclesiastical broadside below the water-line."

Three days after this diplomatic interview between the uncle and nephew, the sailor, who had suddenly returned to Tours by the mail-coach, explained to his aunt, the very evening of his arrival, all the danger that would be incurred by the Listomère family if they persisted in defending that idiot Birotteau. The Baron had caught M. de Bourbonne at the moment when the old gentleman was taking up his stick and hat to leave after his rubber. The "old fox's" intelligence was indispensable to throw a light on the reefs among which the Listomères had been entangled; he rose so early to seek his hat and stick, only to be stopped by a word in his ear—

"Wait; we want to talk."

The young Baron's prompt return, and his air of satisfaction, though contrasting with the gravity his face assumed now and then, had vaguely hinted to M. de Bourbonne of some checks the lieutenant might have received in his cruise against Gamard and Troubert. He manifested no surprise on hearing the Baron proclaim the secret power possessed by the Vicar-General.

"I knew that," said he.

"Well, then," exclaimed the Baroness, "why did you not warn us?"

"Madame," he hastily replied, "if you will forget that I guessed this priest's occult influence, I will forget that you know it as well as I. If I should fail to keep the secret, we might be taken for his accomplices; we should be feared and hated. Do as I do. Pretend to be a dupe; but look carefully where you set your feet. I said quite enough; you did not understand me. I could not compromise myself."

"What must we do now?" said the Baron.

The desertion of Birotteau was not a matter of question; it was the primary condition, and so understood by this council of three.

"To effect a retreat with all the honors of war has always been the greatest achievement of the most skillful generals," said M. de Bourbonne. "Yield to Troubert; if his hatred is less than his vanity, you will gain an ally; but if you yield too much, he will trample on your body, for, as Boileau says, 'Destruction is by choice the spirit of the Church.' Make as though you were quitting the service, and you will escape him, M. le Baron. Dismiss Birotteau, madame, and you will gain Gamard her lawsuit. When you meet the Abbé Troubert at the Archbishop's, ask him if he plays whist; he will answer *Yes*. Invite him to play a rubber in this drawing-room, where he longs to be admitted; he will certainly come. You are a woman; try to enlist this priest in your interest. When the Baron is a ship's captain, his uncle a peer of France, and Troubert a bishop, you can make Birotteau a canon at your leisure. Till then yield; but yield gracefully, and with a threat. Your family can give Troubert quite as much assistance as he can give you; you will meet half-way to admiration. And take soundings constantly as you go, sailor!"

"Poor Birotteau!" said the Baroness.

"Oh! begin at once," said the old man as he took leave. "If some clever Liberal should get hold of that vacuous brain, he would get you into trouble. After all, the law would pronounce in his favor, and Troubert must be afraid of the verdict. As yet he may forgive you for having begun the action, but after a defeat he would be implacable.—I have spoken."

He snapped his snuff-box lid, went to put on his thick shoes, and departed.

The next morning, after breakfast, the Baroness remained alone with Birotteau, and said to him, not without visible embarrassment—

"My dear M. Birotteau, I am going to make a request that you will think very unjust and inconsistent; but both for your sake and for ours you must, in the first place, put an end to your action against Mlle. Gamard by renouncing your claims, and also quit my house."

As he heard these words the poor priest turned pale.

"I am the innocent cause of your misfortunes," she went on; "and I know that but for my nephew you would never have begun the proceedings which now are working woe for you and for us. Listen to me."

And she briefly set forth the immense scope of this affair, explaining the seriousness of its consequences. Her meditations during the night had enabled her

to form an idea of what the Abbé Troubert's former life had been. Thus she could unerringly point out to Birotteau the web in which he had been involved by this skillfully-plotted vengeance, could show him the superior cleverness and power of the enemy, revealing his hatred and explaining its causes; she pictured him as crouching for twelve years to Chapeloud, and now devouring and persecuting Chapeloud in the person of his friend.

The guileless Birotteau clasped his hands as if to pray, and wept with grief at this vision of human wickedness which his innocent soul had never conceived of. Terrified, as though he were standing on the verge of an abyss, he listened to his benefactress with moist and staring eyes, but without expressing a single idea. She said in conclusion—

"I know how vile it is to desert you; but, my dear Abbé, family duties must supersede those of friendship. Bend before this storm, as I must, and I will prove my gratitude. I say nothing of your personal concerns; I undertake them; you shall be released from money difficulties for the rest of your life. By the intervention of M. de Bourbonne, who will know how to save appearances, I will see that you lack nothing. My friend, give me the right to throw you over. I shall remain your friend while conforming to the requirements of the world.—Decide."

The hapless Abbé, quite bewildered, exclaimed—

"Ah! then Chapeloud was right when he said that if Troubert could drag him out of his grave by the heels, he would do it!—He sleeps in Chapeloud's bed!"

"It is no time for lamentations," said Mme. de Listomère. "We have no time to spare. Come——"

Birotteau was too kind-hearted not to submit in any great crisis to the impulsive self-sacrifice of the first moment. But, in any case, his life already was but one long martyrdom.

He answered with a heartbroken look at his protectress, which wrung her soul—

"I am in your hands. I am no more than a straw in the street!"

The local word he used, *bourrier*, is peculiar to Touraine, and its only literal rendering is a straw. But there are pretty little straws, yellow, shiny, and smart, the delight of children; while a *bourrier* is a dirty, colorless, miry straw, left in the gutter, driven by the wind, crushed by the foot of every passer-by.

"But, madame," he went on, "I should not wish to leave the portrait of Chapeloud for the Abbé Troubert. It was done for me, and belongs to me; get that back for me, and I will give up everything else."

"Well," said Mme. de Listomère, "I will go to Mlle. Gamard." She spoke in a tone which showed what an extraordinary effort the Baronne de Listomère was making in stooping to flatter the old maid's conceit. "And I will try to settle everything," she went on. "I hardly dare hope it.—Go and see M. de Bourbonne. Get him to draw up your act of renunciation in due form, and bring it to me signed and witnessed. With the help of the Archbishop, I may perhaps get the thing settled."

Birotteau went away overpowered. Troubert had assumed in his eyes the proportions of an Egyptian pyramid

The man's hands were in Paris, and his elbows in the Close of Saint-Gatien.

"He," said he to himself, "to hinder M. le Marquis de Listomère being made a peer of France!—And then, 'With the help of the Archbishop, perhaps get the thing settled'!"

In comparison with such high interests, Birotteau felt himself a grasshopper; he was honest to himself.

The news of Birotteau's removal was all the more astounding because the reason was undiscoverable. Mme. de Listomère gave out that as her nephew wished to marry and retire from the service, she needed the Abbé's room to add to her own. No one as yet had heard that Birotteau had withdrawn the action. M. de Bourbonne's instructions were thus judiciously carried out.

These two pieces of news, when they should reach the ears of the Vicar-General, must certainly flatter his vanity, by showing him that, though the Listomère family would not capitulate, it would at least remain neutral, tacitly recognizing the secret power of the Church Council; and was not recognition submission? Still, the action remained *sub judice*. Was not this to yield and to threaten?

Thus the Listomères had assumed an attitude precisely similar to that of the Abbé Troubert in this contest; they stood aside, and could direct their forces.

But a serious event now occurred, and added to their difficulties, hindering the success of the means by which M. de Bourbonne and the Listomères hoped to mollify the Gamard and Troubert faction. On the previous day Mlle. Gamard had taken a chill on coming out of the Cathedral, had gone to bed, and was reported to be seriously ill. The whole town rang with lamentations, excited by spurious commiseration. "Mlle. Gamard's highly-strung sensibilities had succumbed to the scandal of this lawsuit. Though she was undoubtedly in the right, she was dying of grief. Birotteau had killed his benefactress." This was the sum and substance of the phrases fired off through the capillary ducts of the great feminine synod, and readily repeated by the town of Tours.

Mme. de Listomère suffered the humiliation of calling on the old woman without gaining anything by her visit. She very politely requested to be allowed to speak to the Vicar-General. Flattered, perhaps, at receiving a woman who had slighted him, in Chapeloud's library, by the fireplace over which the two famous pictures in dispute were hanging, Troubert kept the Baroness waiting a minute, then he consented to see her.

No courtier, no diplomat, ever threw into the discussion of private interests or national negotiations greater skill, dissimulation, and depths of purpose than the Baroness and the Abbé displayed when they found themselves face to face.

Old Bourbonne, like the sponsor, in the Middle Ages, who armed the champion, and fortified his courage by good counsel as he entered the lists, had instructed the Baroness—

"Do not forget your part; you are a peacemaker, and not an interested party. Troubert likewise is a mediator. Weigh your words. Study the tones of the Vicar-General's voice.—If he strokes his chin, you have won him."

Some caricaturists have amused themselves by representing the contrast that

so frequently exists between what we say and what we think. In this place, to represent fully the interesting points of the duel of words that took place between the priest and the fine lady, it is necessary to disclose the thoughts they each kept concealed under apparently trivial speech.

Mme. de Listomère began by expressing the regret she felt about this lawsuit of Birotteau's, and she went on to speak of her desire of seeing the affair settled to the satisfaction of both parties.

"The mischief is done, madame," said the Abbé. "The admirable Mlle. Gamard is dying." (*"I care no more for that stupid creature than for Prester John,"* thought he, *"but I should like to lay her death at your door, and burden your conscience, if you are silly enough to care."*)

"On hearing of her illness," said the Baroness, "I desired the Abbé to sign a withdrawal, which I have brought to that saintly person." (*"I see through you,"* thought she, *"you old rascal; but we are no longer at the mercy of your vagaries. As for you, if you accept the deed, you will have put your foot in it; it will be a confession of complicity."*)

There was a brief silence.

"Mlle. Gamard's temporal affairs are no concern of mine," said the priest at length, closing the deep lids over his eagle eyes to conceal his excitement. (*"Ah, ha, you will not catch me tripping! But God be praised, those cursed lawyers will not fight a case that might bespatter me! But what on earth can the Listomères want, that they are so humble?"*)

"Monsieur," replied the Baronne, "the concerns of M. l'Abbé Birotteau interest me no more than those of Mlle. Gamard do you. But, unluckily, religion might suffer from their quarrels, and in you I see but a mediator, while I myself come forward as a peacemaker . . ." (*"We can neither of us throw dust in the other's eyes, M. Troubert,"* thought she. *"Do you appreciate the epigram in that reply?"*)

"Religion! madame," said the Vicar-General. "Religion stands too high for man to touch it." (*"Religion means me,"* thought he.) "God will judge us unerringly, madame," he added, "and I recognize no other tribunal."

"Well, then, monsieur," replied she, "let us try to make man's judgments agree with God's." (*"Yes, Religion means you."*)

The Abbé Troubert changed his tone.

"Has not monsieur your nephew just been to Paris?" (*"You heard of me there, I fancy,"* thought he; *"I can crush you—you who scorned me! You have come to surrender."*)

"Yes, monsieur, thank you for taking so much interest in him. He is returning to Paris to-night, ordered there by the Minister, who is kindness itself to us, and does not wish him to retire from the service." (*"No, Jesuit, you will not crush us,"* thought she; *"we understand your little game."*) A pause. "I have not approved of his conduct in this affair," she went on, "but a sailor may be forgiven for not understanding the law." (*"Come, let us be allies,"* thought she; *"we shall gain nothing by squabbling."*)

A faint smile dawned, and was lost, in the furrows of the Abbé's face.

"He has done us some service by informing us of the value of those two pictures," said he, looking at them;

"they will be a worthy ornament to the Lady Chapel." (*"You fired an epigram at me, madame,"* thought he; *"there are two for you, and we are quits."*)

"If you present them to Saint-Gatien, I would beg you to allow me to offer to the Church two frames worthy of the place and of the gift." (*"I should like to make you confess that you coveted Birotteau's property,"* thought she.)

"They do not belong to me," said the priest, well on his guard.

"Well, here is the deed that puts an end to all dispute," said Mme. de Listomère, "and restores them to Mlle. Gamard." She laid the document on the table. (*"You see, monsieur, how much I trust you,"* thought she.) "It is worthy of you, monsieur, worthy of your fine character, to reconcile two Christians, though I have ceased to take much interest in M. Birotteau."

"But he is your pensioner," said he, interrupting her.

"No, monsieur, he is no longer under my roof." (*"My brother-in-law's peerage and my nephew's promotion are leading me into very mean actions,"* thought she.)

The Abbé remained unmoved, but his calm aspect was a symptom of violent agitation. Only M. de Bourbonne had divined the secret of that superficial calm. The priest was triumphant.

"Why, then, did you take charge of his act of renunciation?" he asked, moved by a feeling similar to that which makes a woman fish for compliments.

"I could not help feeling some pity for him. Birotteau, whose feeble character must be well known to you, entreated me to see Mlle. Gamard in order to obtain from her, as the price of the surrender of—" the Abbé frowned—"of his *rights*, as recognized by many distinguished lawyers, the portrait—" the priest looked hard at Mme. de Listomère—"of Chapeloud," she said. "I leave it to you to judge of his claim to it . . ." (*"You would lose if you fought the case,"* thought she.)

The tone in which the Baroness uttered the words "distinguished lawyers," showed the priest that she knew the enemy's strength and weakness. Mme. de Listomère displayed so much skill to this experienced connoisseur, that at the end of this conversation, which was carried on for some time in the same key, he went down to see Mlle. Gamard to bring her answer to the proposed bargain.

Troubert soon returned.

"Madame," said he, "I can but repeat the poor dying woman's words, 'M. l'Abbé Chapeloud showed me too much kindness,' said she, 'for me to part from his portrait.'—As for myself, if it were mine, I would not give it up to anyone. I was too faithfully attached to my poor dead friend not to feel that I have a right to claim his likeness against anybody in the world."

"Well, monsieur, do not let us fall out over a bad picture." (*"I care for it no more than you do,"* thought she.) "Keep it; we will have it copied. I am proud to have brought this sad and deplorable lawsuit to an end, and I have personally gained the pleasure of making your acquaintance.—I have heard that you are a fine whist player. You will forgive a woman for being curious," she added with a smile. "If you will come and play occasionally at my house, you cannot

doubt that you will be heartily welcomed."

The Abbé Troubert stroked his chin. (*"He is caught; Bourbonne was right,"* thought she, *"he has his share of vanity."*)

In fact, the Vicar-General was at this moment enjoying the delicious sensation which Mirabeau found irresistible when, in the day of his power, he saw the gates of some mansion which had formerly been closed against him, opened to admit his carriage.

"Madame," replied he, "my occupations are too important to allow of my going into society; but for you what would not a man do?" (*"It is all over with the old girl; I will make up to the Listomères, and do them a good turn if they do me one,"* thought he. *"It is better to have them for friends than for enemies."*)

Mme. de Listomère went home, hoping that the Archbishop would complete a pacification so happily begun. But Birotteau was to gain nothing even by his renunciation. Mme. de Listomère heard next day that Mlle. Gamard was dead. The old maid's will being opened, no one was surprised to learn that she had constituted the Abbé Troubert her universal legatee. Her property was estimated at a hundred thousand crowns. The Vicar-General sent two invitations to the service and burial to Mme. de Listomère's house—one for herself, and the other for her nephew.

"We must go," said she.

"That is just what it means!" exclaimed M. de Bourbonne. "It is a test by which Mgr. Troubert meant to try you. Baron, you must go all the way to the grave," he added to the navy lieutenant, who, for his sins, had not yet left Tours.

The service was held, and was marked by ecclesiastical magnificence. One person only shed tears. That was Birotteau, who, alone in a side chapel where he was not seen, believed himself guilty of this death, and prayed fervently for the soul of the departed, bitterly bewailing himself because he had not obtained her forgiveness for having wronged her.

The Abbé Troubert followed his friend's body to the grave in which she was to be laid. Standing on its brink, he delivered an address, and, thanks to his eloquence, gave monumental dignity to his picture of the narrow life led by the testatrix. The bystanders noted these words in the peroration:—

"This life, full of days devoted to God and to Religion—this life, adorned by so many beautiful actions performed in silence, so many modest and unrecognized virtues, was blighted by a sorrow which we would call unmerited if, here, on the verge of eternity, we could forget that all our afflictions are sent us by God. This holy woman's many friends, knowing how noble was her guileless soul, foresaw that she could endure anything excepting only such detraction as would affect her whole existence. And so perhaps Providence has taken her to rest in God only to rescue her from our petty griefs. Happy are they who here on earth can live at peace with themselves, as Sophie now reposes in the realms of the blest, in her robe of innocence!"

"And when he had ended this grandiloquent discourse," said M. de Bourbonne, who reported all the details of the funeral to Mme. de Listomère that

evening when, the rubbers ended and the doors closed, they were left alone with the Baron, "imagine, if you can, that Louis XI. in a priest's gown giving the holy-water sprinkler a final flourish in this style"—and M. de Bourbonne took up the tongs and imitated the Abbé Troubert's movement so exactly that the Baron and his aunt could not help smiling. "In this alone," added the old man, "did he betray himself. Till then his reserve had been perfect; but now, when he had packed away forever the old maid he so utterly despised and hated, almost as much perhaps as he had detested Chapeloud, he, no doubt, found it impossible to hinder his satisfaction from betraying itself in a gesture."

Next morning Mlle. Salomon came to breakfast with Mme. de Listomère, and as soon as she came in she said quite sadly—

"Our poor Abbé Birotteau has just been dealt a dreadful blow which reveals the most elaborately studied hatred. He is made Curé of Saint-Symphorien."

Saint-Symphorien is a suburb of Tours lying beyond the bridge. This bridge, one of the finest works of French architecture, is nearly two thousand feet long, and the open squares at each end are exactly alike.

"Do you understand?" she added after a pause, amazed at the coolness with which Mme. de Listomère heard this news. "The Abbé Birotteau will there be a hundred leagues from Tours, from his friends, from everything. Is it not exile, and all the more terrible because he will be torn from the town that his eyes will behold every day, while he can hardly ever come to it? He who, since his troubles, has hardly been able to walk, will be obliged to come a league to see us. At the present moment the poor man is in bed with a feverish attack. The priest's residence at Saint-Symphorien is cold and damp, and the parish is too poor to restore it. The poor old man will be buried alive in a real tomb. What a villainous plot!"

It will now, perhaps, suffice in conclusion of this story to report briefly a few subsequent events, and to sketch a last picture.

Five months later the Vicar-General was a bishop; Mme. de Listomère was dead, leaving fifteen hundred francs a year to the Abbé Birotteau. On the day when the Baroness's will was read, Monseigneur Hyacinthe, Bishop of Troyes, was about to leave Tours and take up his residence in his diocese; but he postponed his departure. Furious at having been deceived by a woman to whom he had offered a hand, while she was secretly holding out hers to the man whom he chose to regard as an enemy, Troubert again threatened to mar the Baron's career and hinder the Marquis de Listomère from receiving his peerage. In full council, at the Archbishop's palace, he uttered one of those priestly speeches, big with revenge, though smooth with honeyed mildness.

The ambitious lieutenant came to see this ruthless prelate, who dictated hard terms no doubt, for the Baron's conduct showed absolute subservience to the terrible Jesuit's will.

The new Bishop, by a deed of gift, bestowed Mlle. Gamard's house on the Cathedral Chapter; he gave Chapeloud's bookcase and books to the little Semi-

nary; he dedicated the two disputed pictures to the Lady Chapel; but he kept the portrait of Chapeloud. No one could understand this almost complete surrender of all Mlle. Gamard's property. M. de Bourbonne imagined that he secretly kept all the actual money to enable him to maintain his rank in Paris, if he should be called to sit on the Bench of Bishops in the Upper Chamber.

At last, on the very day before Monseigneur Troubert left Tours, the "old fox" detected the last plot which these gifts had covered, a *coup de grâce* dealt by the most relentless vengeance to the most helpless of victims. The Baron de Listomère disputed Mme. de Listomère's bequest to Birotteau on the ground of undue influence! Within a few days of the first steps being taken in this action, the Baron was appointed to a ship with the rank of captain; the Curé of Saint-Symphorien was, by an act of discipline, placed under an interdict. His ecclesiastical superiors condemned him by anticipation; so the assassin of the late Sophie Gamard was a rogue as well! Now, if Mgr. Troubert had kept the old maid's property, he could hardly have secured Birotteau's disgrace.

At the moment when Monseigneur Hyacinthe, Bishop of Troyes, was passing in a post-chaise, along the quay of Saint-Symphorien, on his way to Paris, poor Birotteau had just been brought out in an armchair to sit in the sun on a terrace. The unhappy priest, stricken by his Archbishop, was pale and haggard. Grief, stamped on every feature, had completely altered the face, which of old had been so blandly cheerful. Ill health had cast a dimness that simulated thought over his eyes, which had been bright once with the pleasures of good living, and devoid of any weight of ideas. This was but the skeleton of that Birotteau, who, only a year ago, vacuous but happy, had waddled across the Close. The Bishop shot a glance of contempt and pity at his victim; then he vouchsafed to forget him, and passed on.

In other times Troubert would certainly have been a Hildebrand or an Alexander VI. Nowadays the Church is no longer a political force, and does not absorb all the powers of isolated men. Hence celibacy has this crying evil, that by concentrating the powers of a man on one single passion, namely, egoism, it makes the unwedded soul mischievous or useless.

We live in a time when the fault of most governments is that they make man for society rather than society for man. A perpetual struggle is going on between the individual and the system that tries to turn him to account, while he tries to turn it to account for his own advantage; formerly, man having really more liberty, showed greater generosity for the public weal. The circle in which men move has insensibly widened; the soul that can apprehend it synthetically will never be anything but a grand exception, since, constantly, in moral as in physical force, what is gained in extent is lost in intensity. Society cannot be based on exceptions.

Originally, man was simply and soley a father; his heart beat warmly, concentrated within the radius of the family. Later on he lived for the Clan or for a small Republic; hence the grand historical heroism of Greece and Rome. Next, he became the member of a caste, or of a religion, and often was truly sub-

lime in his devotion to its greatness; but then the field of his interests was increased by the addition of every intellectual realm. In these days his life is bound up with that of a vast fatherland; ere long his family will be the whole human race.

Will not this moral cosmopolitanism, the thing the Roman Church hopes for, be a sublime mistake? It is so natural to believe in that noble chimera—the brotherhood of men. But, alas! the human machine has not such godlike proportions. The souls that are vast enough to wed a sentiment that is the prerogative of a great man will never be those of plain citizens, of fathers of families.

Certain physiologists opine that if the brain expands, the heart must necessarily shrink. That is a mistake. Is not what looks like egoism in the men who bear in their breast a science, a nation, or its laws, the noblest of passions? Is it not, in a way, a motherhood of the people? To bring forth new races or new ideas, must they not combine in their powerful brain the breast of the mother with the force of God? The history of an Innocent III., of a Peter the Great, of all who have guided an epoch or a nation, would at need prove to be, in the highest order of minds, the immense idea represented by Troubert in the depths of the Close of Saint-Gatien.

A Forsaken Lady

To Her Grace the Duchesse d'Abrantès,
from her devoted servant,

Honoré de Balzac.

Paris, *August,* 1835.

In the early spring of 1822, the Paris doctors sent to Lower Normandy a young man just recovering from an inflammatory complaint, brought on by overstudy, or perhaps by excess of some other kind. His convalescence demanded complete rest, a light diet, bracing air, and freedom from excitement of every kind, and the fat lands of Bessin seemed to offer all these conditions of recovery. To Bayeux, a picturesque place about six miles from the sea, the patient therefore betook himself, and was received with the cordiality characteristic of relatives who lead very retired lives, and regard a new arrival as a godsend.

All little towns are alike, save for a few local customs. When M. le Baron Gaston de Nueil, the young Parisian in question, had spent two or three evenings in his cousin's house, or with the friends who made up Mme. de Saint-Sevère's circle, he very soon had made the acquaintance of the persons whom this exclusive society considered to be "the whole town." Gaston de Nueil recognized in them the invariable stock characters which every observer finds in every one of the many capitals of the little States which made up the France of an older day.

First of all comes the family whose

claims to nobility are regarded as incontestable, and of the highest antiquity in the department, though no one has so much as heard of them a bare fifty leagues away. This species of royal family on a small scale is distantly, but unmistakably, connected with the Navarreins and the Grandlieu family, and related to the Cadignans, and the Blamont-Chauvrys. The head of the illustrious house is invariably a determined sportsman. He has no manners, crushes everybody else with his nominal superiority, tolerates the sub-prefect much as he submits to the taxes, and declines to acknowledge any of the novel powers created by the nineteenth century, pointing out to you as a political monstrosity the fact that the prime minister is a man of no birth. His wife takes a decided tone, and talks in a loud voice. She has had adorers in her time, but takes the sacrament regularly at Easter. She brings up her daughters badly, and is of the opinion that they will always be rich enough with their name.

Neither husband nor wife has the remotest idea of modern luxury. They retain a livery only seen elsewhere on the stage, and cling to old fashions in plate, furniture, and equipages, as in language and manner of life. This is a kind of ancient state, moreover, that suits passably well with provincial thrift. The good folk are, in fact, the lords of the manor of a bygone age, *minus* the quitrents and heriots, the pack of hounds and the laced coats; full of honor among themselves, and one and all loyally devoted to princes whom they only see at a distance. The historical house *incognito* is as quaint a survival as a piece of ancient tapestry. Vegetating somewhere among them there is sure to be an uncle or a brother, a lieutenant-general, an old courtier of the King's, who wears the red ribbon of the order of Saint-Louis, and went to Hanover with the Maréchal de Richelieu, and here you find him like a stray leaf out of some old pamphlet of the time of Louis Quinze.

This fossil greatness finds a rival in another house, wealthier, though of less ancient lineage. Husband and wife spend a couple of months of every winter in Paris, bringing back with them its frivolous tone and short-lived contemporary crazes. Madame is a woman of fashion, though she looks rather conscious of her clothes, and is always behind the mode. She scoffs, however, at the ignorance affected by her neighbors. *Her* plate is of modern fashion; she has "grooms," negroes, a valet-de-chambre, and what not. Her oldest son drives a tilbury, and does nothing (the estate is entailed upon him), his younger brother is auditor to a Council of State. The father is well posted up in official scandals, and tells you anecdotes of Louis XVIII. and Mme. du Cayla. He invests his money in the five per cents., and is careful to avoid the topic of cider, but has been known occasionally to fall a victim to the craze for rectifying the conjectural sums-total of the various fortunes of the department. He is a member of the Departmental Council, has his clothes from Paris, and wears the Cross of the Legion of Honor. In short, he is a country gentleman who has fully grasped the significance of the Restoration, and is coining money at the Chamber, but

his Royalism is less pure than that of the rival house; he takes the *Gazette* and the *Débats*, the other family only read the *Quotidienne*.

His lodship the Bishop, a sometime Vicar-General, fluctuates between the two powers, who pay him the respect due to religion, but at times they bring home to him the moral appended by the worthy la Fontaine to the fable of the *Ass laden with Relics*. The good man's origin is distinctly plebeian.

Then come stars of the second magnitude, men of family with ten or twelve hundred livres a year, captains in the navy or cavalry regiments, or nothing at all. Out on the roads, on horseback, they rank halfway between the curé bearing the sacraments and the tax collector on his rounds. Pretty nearly all of them have been in the Pages or in the Household Troops, and now are peaceably ending their days in a *faisance-valoir*, more interested in felling timber and the cider prospects than in the Monarchy.

Still they talk of the Charter and the Liberals while the cards are making, or over a game at backgammon, when they have exhausted the usual stock topic of *dots*, and have married everybody off according to the genealogies which they all know by heart. Their women-kind are haughty dames, who assume the airs of Court ladies in their basket chaises. They huddle themselves up in shawls and caps by way of full dress; and twice a year, after ripe deliberation, have a new bonnet from Paris, brought as opportunity offers. Exemplary wives are they for the most part, and garrulous.

These are the principal elements of aristocratic gentility, with a few outlying old maids of good family, spinsters who have solved the problem: given a human being, to remain absolutely stationary. They might be sealed up in the houses where you see them; their faces and their dresses are literally part of the fixtures of the town, and the province in which they dwell. They are its tradition, its memory, its quintessence, the *genius loci* incarnate. There is something frigid and monumental about these ladies; they know exactly when to laugh and when to shake their heads, and every now and then give out some utterance which passes current as a witticism.

A few rich townspeople have crept into the miniature Faubourg Saint-Germain, thanks to their money or their aristocratic leanings. But despite their forty years, the circle still say of them, "Young So-and-so has sound opinions," and of such do they make deputies. As a rule, the elderly spinsters are their patronesses, not without comment.

Finally, in this exclusive little set include two or three ecclesiasts, admitted for the sake of their cloth, or for their wit; for these great nobles find their own society rather dull, and introduce the bourgeois element into their drawing-rooms, as a baker puts leaven into his dough.

The sum-total contained by all heads put together consists of a certain quantity of antiquated notions; a few new reflections brewed in company of an evening being added from time to time to the common stock. Like sea-water in a little creek, the phrases which represent these ideas surge up daily, punctually obeying the tidal laws of con-

versation in their flow and ebb; you hear the hollow echo of yesterday, to-day, to-morrow, a year hence, and for evermore. On all things here below they pass immutable judgments, which go to make up a body of tradition into which no power of mortal man can infuse one drop of wit or sense. The lives of these persons revolve with the regularity of clockwork in an orbit of use and wont which admits of no more deviation or change than their opinions on matters religious, political, moral, or literary.

If a stranger is admitted to the *cénacle,* every member of it in turn will say (not without a trace of irony), "You will not find the brilliancy of your Parisian society here," and proceed forthwith to criticise the life led by his neighbors, as if he himself were an exception who had striven, and vainly striven, to enlighten the rest. But any stranger so ill-advised as to concur in any of their freely expressed criticism of each other, is pronounced at once to be an ill-natured person, a heathen, an outlaw, a reprobate Parasian "as Parasians mostly are."

Before Gaston de Nueil made his appearance in this little world of strictly observed etiquette, where every detail of life is an integrant part of a whole, and everything is known; where the values of personality and real estate are quoted like stocks on the last sheet of the newspaper—before his arrival he had been weighed in the unerring scales of Bayeusaine judgment.

His cousin, Mm. d Sainte-Sevère, had already given out the amount of his fortune, and the sum of his expectations, had produced the family tree, and expatiated on the talents, breeding, and modesty of this particular branch. So he received the precise amount of attention to which he was entitled; he was accepted as a worthy scion of a good stock; and, for he was but twenty-three, was made welcome without ceremony, though certain young ladies and mothers of daughters looked not unkindly upon him.

He had an income of eighteen thousand livres from land in the valley of the Auge; and sooner or later his father, as in duty bound, would leave him the château of Manerville, with the lands thereunto belonging. As for his education, political career, personal qualities, and qualifications—no one so much as thought of raising the questions. His land was undeniable, his rentals steady; excellent plantations had been made; the tenants paid for repairs, rates, and taxes; the apple-trees were thirty-eight years old; and, to crown all, his father was in treaty for two hundred acres of woodland just outside the paternal park, which he intended to inclose with walls. No hopes of a political career, no fame on earth, can compare with such advantages as these.

Whether out of malice or design, Mme. de Sainte-Sevère omitted to mention that Gaston had an elder brother; nor did Gaston himself say a word about him. But, at the same time, it is true that the brother was consumptive, and to all appearance would shortly be laid in earth, lamented and forgotten.

At first Gaston de Nueil amused himself at the expense of the circle. He drew, as it were, for his mental album, a series of portraits of these folk, with their angular, wrinkled faces and hooked noses, their crotchets and ludicrous ec-

centricities of dress, portraits which possessed all the racy flavor of truth. He delighted in their "Normanisms," in the primitive quaintness of their ideas and characters. For a short time he flung himself into their squirrel's life of busy gyrations in a cage. Then he began to feel the want of variety, and grew tired of it. It was like the life of the cloister, cut short before it had well begun. He drifted on till he reached a crisis, which is neither spleen nor disgust, but combines all the symptoms of both. When a human being is transplanted into an uncongenial soil, to lead a starved, stunted existence, there is always a little discomfort over the transition. Then gradually, if nothing removes him from his surroundings, he grows accustomed to them, and adapts himself to the vacuity which grows upon him and renders him powerless. Even now, Gaston's lungs were accustomed to the air; and he was willing to discern a kind of vegetable happiness in days that brought no mental exertion and no responsibilities. The costant stirring of the sap of life, the fertilizing influences of mind on mind, after which he had sought so eagerly in Paris, were beginning to fade from his memory, and he was in a fair way of becoming a fossil with these fossils, and ending his days among them, content, like the companions of Ulysses, in his gross envelope.

One evening Gaston de Nueil was seated between a dowager and one of the vicars-general of the diocese, in a gray-paneled drawing-room, floored with large, white tiles. The family portraits which adorned the walls looked down upon four card-tables, and some sixteen persons gathered about them, chattering over their whist. Gaston, thinking of nothing, digesting one of those exquisite dinners to which the provincial looks forward all through the day, found himself justifying the customs of the country.

He began to understand why these good folk continued to play with yesterday's pack of cards and shuffled them on a threadbare tablecloth, and how it was that they had ceased to dress for themselves or others. He saw the glimmerings of something like a philosophy in the even tenor of their perpetual round, in the calm of their methodical monotony, in their ignorance of the refinements of luxury. Indeed, he almost came to think that luxury profited nothing; and even now, the city of Paris, with its passions, storms, and pleasures, was scarcely more than a memory of childhood.

He admired in all sincerity the red hands and shy, bashful manner of some young lady who at first struck him as an awkward simpleton, unattractive to the last degree, and surpassingly ridiculous. His doom was sealed. He had gone from the provinces to Paris; he had led the feverish life of Paris; and now he would have sunk back into the lifeless life of the provinces, but for a chance remark which reached his ear—a few words that called up a swift rush of such emotion as he might have felt when a strain of really great music mingles with the accompaniment of some tedious opera.

"You went to call on Mme. de Beauséant yesterday, did you not?" The speaker was an elderly lady, and she addressed the head of the local royal family.

"I went this morning. She was so poorly and depressed, that I could not persuade her to dine with us to-morrow."

"With Mme. de Champignelles?" exclaimed the dowager, with something like astonishment in her manner.

"With my wife," calmly assented the noble. "Mme. de Beauséant is descended from the House of Burgundy, on the spindle side, 'tis true, but the name atones for everything. My wife is very much attached to the Vicomtesse, and the poor lady has lived alone such a long while, that——"

The Marquis de Champignelles looked round about him while he spoke with an air of cool unconcern, so that it was almost impossible to guess whether he made a concession to Mme. de Beauséant's misfortunes, or paid homage to her noble birth; whether he felt flattered to receive her in his house, or, on the contrary, sheer pride was the motive that led him to try to force the country families to meet the Vicomtesse.

The women appeared to take counsel of each other by a glance; there was a sudden silence in the room, and it was felt that their attitude was one of disapproval.

"Does this Mme. de Beauséant happen to be the lady whose adventure with M. d'Ajuda-Pinto made so much noise?" asked Gaston of his neighbor.

"The very same," he was told. "She came to Courcelles after the marriage of the Marquis d'Ajuda; nobody visits her. She has, besides, too much sense not to see that she is in a false position, so she has made no attempt to see anyone. M. de Champignelles and a few gentlemen went to call upon her, but she would see none but M. de Champignelles, perhaps because he is a connection of the family. They are related through the Beauséants; the father of the present Vicomte married a Mlle. de Champignelles of the older branch. But thought the Vicomtesse de Beauséant is supposed to be a descendant of the House of Burgundy, you can understand that we could not admit a wife separated from her husband into our society here. We are foolish enough still to cling to these old-fashioned ideas. There was the less excuse for the Vicomtesse, because M. de Beauséant is a well-bred man of the world, who would have been quite ready to listen to reason. But his wife is quite mad——" and so forth and so forth.

M. de Nueil, still listening to the speaker's voice, gathered nothing of the sense of the words; his brain was too full of thick-coming fancies. Fancies? What other name can you give to the alluring charms of an adventure that tempts the imagination and sets vague hopes springing up in the soul; to the sense of coming events and mysterious felicity and fear at hand, while as yet there is no substance of fact on which these phantoms of caprice can fix and feed? Over these fancies thought hovers, conceiving impossible projects, giving in the germ all the joys of love. Perhaps, indeed, all passion is contained in that thought-germ, as the beauty, and fragrance, and rich color of the flower are all packed in the seed.

M. de Nueil did not know that Mme. de Beauséant had taken refuge in Normandy, after a notoriety which women for the most part envy and condemn, especially when youth and beauty in

some sort excuse the transgression. Any sort of celebrity bestows an inconceivable prestige. Apparently for women, as for families, the glory of the crime effaces the stain; and if such and such a noble house is proud of its tale of heads that have fallen on the scaffold, a young and pretty woman becomes more interesting for the dubious renown of a happy love or a scandalous desertion, and the more she is to be pitied, the more she excites our sympathies. We are only pitiless to the commonplace. If, moreover, we attract all eyes, we are to all intents and purposes great; how, indeed, are we to be seen unless we raise ourselves above other people's heads? The common herd of humanity feels an involuntary respect for any person who can rise above it, and is not over particular as to the means by which they rise.

It may have been that some such motives influenced Gaston de Nueil at unawares, or perhaps it was curiosity, or a craving for some interest in his life; or, in a word, that crowd of inexplicable impulses which, for want of a better name, we are wont to call "fatality," that drew him to Mme. de Beauséant.

The figure of the Vicomtesse de Beauséant rose up suddenly before him with gracious thronging associations. She was a new world for him, a world of fears and hopes, a world to fight for and to conquer. Inevitably he felt the contrast between this vision and the human beings in the shabby room; and then, in truth, she was a woman; what woman had he seen so far in this dull, little world, where calculation replaced thought and feeling, where courtesy was a cut-and-dried formality, and ideas of the very simplest were too alarming to be received or to pass current? The sound of Mme. de Beauséant's name revived a young man's dreams and wakened urgent desires that had lain dormant for a little.

Gaston de Nueil was absent-minded and preoccupied for the rest of that evening. He was pondering how he might gain access to Mme. de Beauséant, and truly it was no very easy matter. She was believed to be extremely clever. But if men and women of parts may be captivated by something subtle or eccentric, they are also exacting, and can read all that lies below the surface; and after the first step has been taken, the chances of failure and success in the difficult task of pleasing them are about even. In this particular case, moreover, the Vicomtesse, besides the pride of her position, had all the dignity of her name. Her utter seclusion was the least of the barriers raised between her and the world. For which reasons it was well nigh impossible that a stranger, however well born, could hope for admittance; and yet the next morning found M. de Nueil taking his walks abroad in the direction of Courcelles, a dupe of illusions natural at his age. Several times he made the circuit of the garden walls, looking earnestly through every gap at the closed shutters or open windows, hoping for some romantic chance, on which he founded schemes for introducing himself into this unknown lady's presence, without a thought of their impracticability. Morning after morning was spent in this way to mighty little purpose; but with each day's walk, that vision of a woman living apart from the world, of love's martyr buried in soli-

tude, loomed larger in his thoughts, and was enshrined in his soul. So Gaston de Nueil walked under the walls of Courcelles, and some gardener's heavy footstep would set his heart beating high with hope.

He thought of writing to Mme. de Beauséant, but on mature consideration, what can you say to a woman whom you have never seen, a complete stranger? And Gaston had little self-confidence. Like most young persons with a plentiful crop of illusions still standing, he dreaded the mortifying contempt of silence more than death itself, and shuddered at the thought of sending his first tender epistle forth to face so many chances of being thrown on the fire. He was distracted by innumerable conflicting ideas. But by dint of inventing chimeras, weaving romances, and cudgeling his brains, he hit at last upon one of the hopeful stratagems that are sure to occur to your mind if you persevere long enough, a stratagem which must make clear to the most inexperienced woman that here was a man who took a fervent interest in her. The caprice of social conventions puts as many barriers between lovers as any Oriental imagination can devise in the most delightfully fantastic tale; indeed, the most extravagant pictures are seldom exaggerations. In real life, as in the fairy tales, the woman belongs to him who can reach her and set her free from the position in which she languishes. The poorest of calenders that ever fell in love with the daughter of the Khalif is in truth scarcely further from his lady than Gaston de Nueil from Mme. de Beauséant. The Vicomtesse knew absolutely nothing of M. de Nueil's wanderings round her house; Gaston de Nueil's love grew to the height of the obstacles to overleap; and the distance set between him and his extemporized lady-love produced the usual effect of distance, in lending enchantment.

One day, confident in his inspiration, he hoped everything from the love that must pour forth from his eyes. Spoken words, in his opinion, were more eloquent than the most passionate letter; and, besides, he would engage feminine curiosity to plead for him. He went, therefore, to M. de Champignelles, proposing to employ that gentleman for the better success of his enterprise. He informed the Marquis that he had been intrusted with a delicate and important commission which concerned the Vicomtesse de Beauséant, that he felt doubtful whether she would read a letter written in an unknown handwriting, or put confidence in a stranger. Would M. de Champignelles, on his next visit, ask the Vicomtesse if she would consent to receive him—Gaston de Nueil? While he asked the Marquis to keep his secret in case of a refusal, he very ingeniously insinuated sufficient reasons for his own admittance, to be duly passed on to the Vicomtesse. Was not M. de Champignelles a man of honor, a loyal gentleman incapable of lending himself to any transaction in bad taste, nay, the merest suspicion of bad taste! Love lends a young man all the self-possession and astute craft of an old ambassador; all the Marquis's harmless vanities were gratified, and the haughty grandee was completely duped. He tried hard to fathom Gaston's secret; but the latter, who would have been greatly perplexed to tell it, turned off M. de Cham-

pignelles's adroit questioning with a Norman's shrewdness, till the Marquis, as a gallant Frenchman, complimented his young visitor upon his discretion.

M. de Champignelles hurried off at once to Courcelles, with that eagerness to serve a pretty woman which belongs to his time of life. In the Vicomtesse de Beauséant's position, such a message was likely to arouse keen curiosity; so, although her memory supplied no reason at all that could bring M. de Nueil to her house, she saw no objection to his visit—after some prudent inquiries as to his family and condition. At the same time, she began by a refusal. Then she discussed the propriety of the matter with M. de Champignelles, directing her questions so as to discover, if possible, whether he knew the motives for the visit, and finally revoked her negative answer. The discussion and the discretion shown perforce by the Marquis had piqued her curiosity.

M. de Champignelles had no mind to cut a ridiculous figure. He said, with the air of a man who can keep another's counsel, that the Vicomtesse must know the purpose of this visit perfectly well; while the Vicomtesse, in all sincerity, had no notion what it could be. Mme. de Beauséant, in perplexity, connected Gaston with people whom he had never met, went astray after various wild conjectures, and asked herself if she had seen this M. de Nueil before. In truth, no love letter, however sincere or skillfully indited, could have produced so much effect as this riddle. Again and again Mme. de Beauséant puzzled over it.

When Gaston heard that he might call upon the Vicomtesse, his rapture at so soon obtaining the ardently longed-for good fortune was mingled with singular embarrassment. How was he to contrive a suitable sequel to this stratagem?

"Bah! I shall see *her*," he said over and over again to himself as he dressed. "See her, and that is everything!"

He fell to hoping that once across the threshold of Courcelles he should find an expedient for unfastening this Gordian knot of his own tying. There are believers in the omnipotence of necessity who never turn back; the close presence of danger is an inspiration that calls out all their powers for victory. Gaston de Nueil was one of these.

He took particular pains with his dress, imagining, as youth is apt to imagine, that success or failure hangs on the position of a curl, and ignorant of the fact that anything is charming in youth. And, in any case, such women as Mme. de Beauséant are only attracted by the charms of wit or character of an unusual order. Greatness of character flatters their vanity, promises a great passion, seems to imply a comprehension of the requirements of their hearts. Wit amuses them, responds to the subtlety of their natures, and they think they are understood. And what do all women wish but to be amused, understood, or adored? It is only after much reflection on the things of life that we understand the consummate coquetry of neglect of dress and reserve at a first interview; and by the time we have gained sufficient astuteness for successful strategy, we are too old to profit by our experience.

While Gaston's lack of confidence in his mental equipment drove him to

borrow charms from his clothes, Mme. de Beauséant herself was instinctively giving more attention to her toilette.

"I would rather not frighten people, at all events," she said to herself as she arranged her hair.

In M. de Nueil's character, person, and manner there was that touch of unconscious originality which gives a kind of flavor to things that anyone might say or do, and absolves everything that they may choose to do or say. He was highly cultivated, he had a keen brain, and a face, mobile as his own nature, which won the good will of others. The promise of passion and tenderness in the bright eyes was fulfilled by an essentially kindly heart. The resolution which he made as he entered the house at Courcelles was in keeping with his frank nature and ardent imagination. But, bold as he was with love, his heart beat violently when he had crossed the great court, laid out like an English garden, and the man-servant, who had taken his name to the Vicomtesse, returned to say that she would receive him.

"M. le Baron de Nueil."

Gaston came in slowly, but with sufficient ease of manner; and it is a more difficult thing, be it said, to enter a room where there is but one woman, than a room that holds a score.

A great fire was burning on the hearth in spite of the mild weather, and by the soft light of the candles in the sconces he saw a young woman sitting on a high-backed *bergère* in the angle by the hearth. The seat was so low that she could move her head freely; every turn of it was full of grace and delicate charm, whether she bent, leaning forward, or raised and held it erect, slowly and languidly, as though it were a heavy burden, so low that she could cross her feet and let them appear, or draw them back under the folds of a long, black dress.

The Vicomtesse made as if she would lay the book that she was reading on a small, round stand; but as she did so, she turned towards M. de Nueil, and the volume, insecurely laid upon the edge, fell to the ground between the stand and the sofa. This did not seem to disconcert her. She looked up, bowing almost imperceptibly in response to his greeting, without rising from the depths of the low chair in which she lay. Bending forwards, she stirred the fire briskly, and stooped to pick up a fallen glove, drawing it mechanically over her left hand, while her eyes wandered in search of its fellow. The glance was instantly checked, however, for she stretched out a thin, white, all but transparent right hand, with flawless ovals of rose-colored nail at the tips of the slender, ringless fingers, and pointed to a chair as if to bid Gaston be seated. He sat down, and she turned her face questioningly towards him. Words cannot describe the subtlety of the winning charm and inquiry in that gesture; deliberate in its kindliness, gracious yet accurate in expression, it was the outcome of early education and of a constant use and wont of the graciousnesses of life. Those movements of hers, so swift, so deft, succeeded each other so smoothly, that Gaston de Nueil was fascinated by the blending of a pretty woman's fastidious carelessness with the high-bred manner of a great lady.

Mme. de Beauséant stood out in such strong contrast against the automatons

among whom he had spent two months of exile in that out-of-the-world district of Normandy, that he could not but find in her the realization of his romantic dreams; and, on the other hand. he could not compare her perfections with those of other women whom he had formerly admired. Here in her presence, in a drawing-room like some salon in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, full of costly trifles lying about upon the tables, and flowers and books, he felt as if he were back in Paris. It was a real Parisian carpet beneath his feet, he saw once more the high-bred type of Parisienne, the fragile outlines of her form, her exquisite charm, her disdain of the studied effects which do so much to spoil provincial women.

Mme. de Beauséant had fair hair and dark eyes, and the pale complexion that belongs to fair hair. She held up her brow nobly like some fallen angel, grown proud through the fall, disdainful of pardon. Her way of gathering her thick hair into a crown of plaits above the broad, curving lines of the bandeaux upon her forehead, added to the queenliness of her face. Imagination could discover the ducal coronet of Burgundy in the spiral threads of her golden hair; all the courage of her house seemed to gleam from the great lady's brilliant eyes, such courage as women use to repel audacity or scorn, for they were full of tenderness for gentleness. The outline of that little head, so admirably poised above the long, white throat, the delicate, fine features, the subtle curves of the lips, the mobile face itself, wore an expression of delicate discretion, a faint semblance of irony suggestive of craft and insolence. Yet it would have been difficult to refuse forgiveness to those two feminine failings in her; for the lines that came out in her forehead whenever her face was not in repose, like her upward glances (that pathetic trick of manner), told unmistakably of unhappiness, of a passion that had all but cost her her life. A woman, sitting in the great, silent salon, a woman cut off from the rest of the world in this remote little valley, alone, with the memories of her brilliant, happy, and impassioned youth, of continual gayety and homage paid on all sides, now replaced by the horrors of the void—was there not something in the sight to strike awe that deepened with reflection? Consciousness of her own value lurked in her smile. She was neither wife nor mother, she was an outlaw; she had lost the one heart that could set her pulses beating without shame; she had nothing from without to support her reeling soul; she must even look for strength from within, live her own life, cherish no hope save that of forsaken love, which looks forward to Death's coming, and hastens his lagging footsteps. And this while life was in its prime. Oh! to feel destined for happiness and to die—never having given nor received it! A woman too! What pain was this! These thoughts, flashing across M. de Nueil's mind like lightning, left him very humble in the presence of the greatest charm with which woman can be invested. The triple aureole of beauty, nobleness, and misfortune dazzled him; he stood in dreamy, almost open-mouthed, admiration of the Vicomtesse. But he found nothing to say to her.

Mme. de Beauséant, by no means displeased, no doubt, by his surprise, held

out her hand with a kindly but imperious gesture; then, summoning a smile to her pale lips, as if obeying, even yet, the woman's impulse to be gracious—

"I have heard from M. de Champignelles of a message which you have kindly undertaken to deliver, monsieur," she said. "Can it be from——"

With that terrible phrase Gaston understood, even more clearly than before, his own ridiculous position, the bad taste and bad faith of his behavior towards a woman so noble and so unfortunate. He reddened. The thoughts that crowded in upon him could be read in his troubled eyes; but suddenly, with the courage which youth draws from a sense of its own wrongdoing, he gained confidence, and very humbly interrupted Mme. de Beauséant.

"Madame," he faltered out, "I do not deserve the happiness of seeing you. I have deceived you basely. However strong the motive may have been, it can never excuse the pitiful subterfuge which I used to gain my end. But, madame, if your goodness will permit me to tell you——"

The Vicomtesse glanced at M. de Nueil, haughty disdain in her whole manner. She stretched her hand to the bell and rang it.

"Jacques," she said, "light this gentleman to the door," and she looked with dignity at the visitor.

She rose proudly, bowed to Gaston, and then stooped for the fallen volume. If all her movements on his entrance had been caressingly dainty and gracious, her every gesture now was no less severely frigid. M. de Nueil rose to his feet, but he stood waiting. Mme. de Beauséant flung another glance at him. "Well, why do you not go?" she seemed to say.

There was such cutting irony in that glance that Gaston grew white as if he were about to faint. Tears came into his eyes, but he would not let them fall, and scorching shame and despair dried them. He looked back at Mme. de Beauséant, and a certain pride and consciousness of his own worth was mingled with his humility; the Vicomtesse had a right to punish him, but ought she to use her right? Then he went out.

As he crossed the ante-chamber, a clear head, and wits sharpened by passion, were not slow to grasp the danger of his situation.

"If I leave this house, I can never come back to it again," he said to himself. "The Vicomtesse will always think of me as a fool. It is impossible that a woman, and such a woman, should not guess the love that she has called forth. Perhaps she feels a little, vague, involuntary regret for dismissing me so abruptly. —But she could not do otherwise, and she cannot recall her sentence. It rests with me to understand her."

At that thought Gaston stopped short on the flight of steps with an exclamation; he turned sharply, saying, "I have forgotten something," and went back to the salon. The lackey, all respect for a baron and the rights of property, was completely deceived by the natural utterance, and followed him. Gaston returned quietly and unannounced. The Vicomtesse, thinking that the intruder was the servant, looked up and beheld M. de Nueil.

"Jacques lighted me to the door," he said, with a half-sad smile which dis-

pelled any suspicion of jest in those words, while the tone in which they were spoken went to the heart. Mme. de Beauséant was disarmed.

"Very well, take a seat," she said.

Gaston eagerly took possession of a chair. His eyes were shining with happiness; the Vicomtesse, unable to endure the brilliant light in them, looked down at the book. She was enjoying a delicious, ever new sensation; the sense of a man's delight in her presence is an unfailing feminine instinct. And then, besides, he had divined her, and a woman is so grateful to the man who has mastered the apparently capricious, yet logical, reasoning of her heart; who can track her thought through the seemingly contradictory workings of her mind, and read the sensations, or shy or bold, written in fleeting red, a bewildering maze of coquetry and self-revelation.

"Madame," Gaston exclaimed in a low voice, "my blunder you know, but you do not know how much I am to blame. If you only knew what joy it was to——"

"Ah! take care," she said, holding up one finger with an air of mystery, as she put out her hand towards the bell.

The charming gesture, the gracious threat, no doubt, called up some sad thought, some memory of the old happy time when she could be wholly charming and gentle without an afterthought; when the gladness of her heart justified every caprice, and put charm into every least movement. The lines in her forehead gathered between her brows, and the expression of her face grew dark in the soft candle-light. Then looking across at M. de Nueil gravely but not unkindly, she spoke like a woman who deeply feels the meaning of every word.

"This is all very ridiculous! Once upon a time, monsieur, when thoughtless high spirits were my privilege, I should have laughed fearlessly over your visit with you. But now my life is very much changed. I cannot do as I like, I am obliged to think. What brings you here? Is it curiosity? In that case I am paying dearly for a little fleeting pleasure. Have you fallen *passionately* in love already with a woman whom you have never seen, a woman with whose name slander has, of course, been busy? If so, your motive in making this visit is based on disrespect, on an error which accident brought into notoriety."

She flung her book down scornfully upon the table, then with a terrible look at Gaston, she went on: "Because I once was weak, must it be supposed that I am always weak? This is horrible, degrading. Or have you come here to pity me? You are very young to offer sympathy with heart troubles. Understand this clearly, sir, that I would rather have scorn than pity. I will not endure compassion from anyone."

There was a brief pause.

"Well, sir," she continued (and the face that she turned to him was gentle and sad), "whatever motive induced this rash intrusion upon my solitude, it is very painful to me, you see. You are too young to be totally without good feeling, so surely you will feel that this behavior of yours is improper. I forgive you for it, and, as you see, I am speaking of it to you without bitterness. You will not come here again, will you? I am entreating when I might command. If you come to see me again, neither

you nor I can prevent the whole place from believing that you are my lover, and you would cause me great additional annoyance. You do not mean to do that, I think."

She said no more, but looked at him with a great dignity which abashed him.

"I have done wrong, madame," he said, with deep feeling in his voice, "but it was through enthusiasm and thoughtlessness and eager desire of happiness, the qualities and defects of my age. Now, I understand that I ought not to have tried to see you," he added; "but, at the same time, the desire was a very natural one"—and making an appeal to feeling rather than to the intellect, he described the weariness of his enforced exile. He drew a portrait of a young man in whom the fires of life were burning themselves out, conveying the impression that here was a heart worthy of tender love, a heart which, notwithstanding, had never known the joys of love for a young and beautiful woman of refinement and taste. He explained, without attempting to justify, his unusual conduct. He flattered Mme. de Beauséant by showing that she had realized for him the ideal lady of a young man's dreams, the ideal sought by so many, and so often sought in vain. Then he touched upon his morning prowlings under the walls of Courcelles, and his wild thoughts at the first sight of the house, till he excited that vague feeling of indulgence which a woman can find in her heart for the follies committed for her sake.

An impassioned voice was speaking in the chill solitude; the speaker brought with him a warm breath of youth and the charms of a carefully cultivated mind. It was so long since Mme. de Beauséant had felt stirred by real feeling delicately expressed, that it affected her very strongly now. In spite of herself, she watched M. de Nueil's expressive face, and admired the noble confidence of a soul, unbroken as yet by the cruel discipline of the life of the world, unfretted by continual scheming to gratify personal ambition and vanity. Gaston was in the flower of his youth, he impressed her as a man with something in him, unaware as yet of the great career that lay before him. So both these two made reflections most dangerous for their peace of mind, and both strove to conceal their thoughts. M. de Nueil saw in the Vicomtesse a rare type of woman, always the victim of her perfection and tenderness; her graceful beauty is the least of her charms for those who are privileged to know the infinite of feeling and thought and goodness in the soul within; a woman whose instinctive feeling for beauty runs through all the most varied expressions of love, purifying its transports, turning them to something almost holy; wonderful secret of womanhood, the exquisite gift that Nature so seldom bestows. And the Vicomtesse, on her side, listening to the ring of sincerity in Gaston's voice, while he told of his youthful troubles, began to understand all that grown children of five-and-twenty suffer from diffidence, when hard work has kept them alike from corrupting influences and intercourse with men and women of the world whose sophistical reasoning and experience destroy the fair qualities of youth. Here was the ideal of women's dreams, a man unspoiled as yet by the egoism of family

or success, or by that narrow selfishness which blights the first impulses of honor, devotion, self-sacrifice, and high demands of self; all the flowers so soon wither that enrich at first the life of delicate but strong emotions, and keep alive the loyalty of the heart.

But these two, once launched forth into the vast of sentiment, went far indeed in theory, sounding the depths in either soul, testing the sincerity of their expressions; only, whereas Gaston's experiments were made unconsciously, Mme. de Beauséant had a purpose in all that she said. Bringing her natural and acquired subtlety to the work, she sought to learn M. de Nueil's opinions by advancing, as far as she could do so, views diametrically opposed to her own. So witty and so gracious was she, so much herself with this stranger, with whom she felt completely at ease, because she felt sure that they should never meet again, that, after some delicious epigram of hers, Gaston exclaimed unthinkingly—

"Oh! madame, how could any man have left you?"

The Vicomtesse was silent. Gaston reddened, he thought that he had offended her; but she was not angry. The first deep thrill of delight since the day of her calamity had taken her by surprise. The skill of the cleverest *roué* could not have made the impression that M. de Nueil made with that cry from the heart. That verdict wrung from a young man's candor gave her back innocence in her own eyes, condemned the world, laid the blame upon the lover who had left her, and justified her subsequent solitary drooping life. The world's absolution, the heartfelt sympathy, the social esteem so longed for, and so harshly refused, nay, all her secret desires were given her to the full in that exclamation, made fairer yet by the heart's sweetest flatteries and the admiration that women always relish eagerly. He understood her, understood all, and he had given her, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, the opportunity of rising higher through her fall. She looked at the clock.

"Ah! madame, do not punish me for my heedlessness. If you grant me but one evening, vouchsafe not to shorten it."

She smiled at the pretty speech.

"Well, as we must never meet again," she said, "what signifies a moment more or less? If you were to care for me, it would be a pity."

"It is too late now," he said.

"Do not tell me that," she answered gravely. "Under any other circumstances I should be very glad to see you. I will speak frankly, and you will understand how it is that I do not choose to see you again, and ought not to do so. You have too much magnanimity not to feel that if I were so much as suspected of a second trespass, everyone would think of me as a contemptible and vulgar woman; I should be like other women. A pure and blameless life will bring my character into relief. I am too proud not to endeavor to live like one apart in the world, a victim of the law through my marriage, man's victim through my love. If I were not faithful to the position which I have taken up, then I should deserve all the reproach that is heaped upon me; I should be lowered in my own eyes. I had not enough lofty social virtue to remain with a man whom I did not

love. I have snapped the bonds of marriage in spite of the law; it was wrong, it was a crime, it was anything you like, but for me the bonds meant death. I meant to live. Perhaps if I had been a mother I could have endured the torture of a forced marriage of suitability. At eighteen we scarcely know what is done with us, poor girls that we are! I have broken the laws of the world, and the world has punished me; we both did rightly. I sought happiness. Is it not a law of our nature to seek for happiness? I was young, I was beautiful . . . I thought that I had found a nature as loving, as apparently passionate. I was loved indeed; for a little while . . ."

She paused.

"I used to think," she said, "that no one could leave a woman in such a position as mine. I have been forsaken; I must have offended in some way. Yes, in some way, no doubt, I failed to keep some law of our nature, was too loving, too devoted, too exacting—I do not know. Evil days have brought light with them. For a long while I blamed another, now I am content to bear the whole blame. At my own expense, I have absolved that other of whom I once thought I had a right to complain. I had not the art to keep him; fate has punished me heavily for my lack of skill. I only knew how to love; how can one keep one's self in mind when one loves? So I was a slave when I should have sought to be a tyrant. Those who know me may condemn me, but they will respect me too. Pain has taught me that I must not lay myself open to this a second time. I cannot understand how it is that I am living yet, after the anguish of that first week of the most fearful crisis in a woman's life. Only from three years of loneliness would it be possible to draw strength to speak of that time as I am speaking now. Such agony, monsieur, usually ends in death; but this—well, it was the agony of death with no tomb to end it. Oh! I have known pain indeed!"

The Vicomtesse raised her beautiful eyes to the ceiling; and the cornice, no doubt, received all the confidences which a stranger might not hear. When a woman is afraid to look at her interlocutor, there is in truth no gentler, meeker, more accommodating confidante than the cornice. The cornice is quite an institution in the boudoir; what is it but the confessional, *minus* the priest?

Mme. de Beauséant was eloquent and beautiful at that moment; nay, "coquettish," if the word were not too heavy. By justifying herself, by raising insurmountable barriers between herself and love, she was stimulating every sentiment in the man before her; nay, more, the higher she set the goal, the more conspicuous it grew. At last, when her eyes had lost the too eloquent expression given to them by painful memories, she let them fall on Gaston.

"You acknowledge, do you not, that I am bound to lead a solitary, self-contained life?" she said quietly.

So sublime was she in her reasoning and her madness, that M. de Nueil felt a wild longing to throw himself at her feet; but he was afraid of making himself ridiculous, so he held his enthusiasm and his thoughts in check. He was afraid, too, that he might totally fail to express them, and in no less terror of some awful rejection on her part, or of

her mockery, an apprehension which strikes like ice to the most fervid soul. The revulsion which led him to crush down every feeling as it sprang up in his heart cost him the intense pain that diffident and ambitious natures experience in the frequent crises when they are compelled to stifle their longings. And yet, in spite of himself, he broke the silence to say in a faltering voice—

"Madame, permit me to give way to one of the strongest emotions of my life, and own to all that you have made me feel. You set the heart in me swelling high! I feel within me a longing to make you forget your mortifications, to devote my life to this, to give you love for all who ever have given you wounds or hate. But this is a very sudden outpouring of the heart, nothing can justify it to-day, and I ought not——"

"Enough, monsieur," said Mme. de Beauséant; "we have both of us gone too far. By giving you the sad reasons for a refusal which I am compelled to give, I meant to soften it and not to elicit homage. Coquetry only suits a happy woman. Believe me, we must remain strangers to each other. At a later day you will know that ties which must inevitably be broken ought not to be formed at all."

She sighed lightly, and her brows contracted, but almost immmediately grew clear again.

"How painful it is for a woman to be powerless to follow the man she loves through all the phases of his life! And if that man loves her truly, his heart must surely vibrate with pain to the deep trouble in hers. Are they not twice unhappy?"

There was a short pause. Then she rose smiling.

"You little suspected, when you came to Courcelles, that you were to hear a sermon, did you?"

Gaston felt even further than at first from this extraordinary woman. Was the charm of that delightful hour due after all to the coquetry of the mistress of the house? She had been anxious to display her wit. He bowed stiffly to the Vicomtesse, and went away in desperation.

On the way home he tried to detect the real character of a creature supple and hard as a steel spring; but he had seen her pass through so many phases, that he could not make up his mind about her. The tones of her voice, too, were ringing in his ears; her gestures, little movements of her head, and the varying expression of her eyes grew more gracious in memory, more fascinating as he thought of them. The Vicomtesse's beauty shone out again for him in the darkness; his reviving impressions called up yet others, and he was enthralled anew by womanly charm and wit, which at first he had not perceived. He fell to wandering musings, in which the most lucid thoughts grow refractory and flatly contradict each other, and the soul passes through a brief frenzy fit. Youth only can understand all that lies in the dithyrambic outpourings of youth when, after a stormy siege of the most frantic folly and coolest common-sense, the heart finally yields to the assault of the latest comer, be it hope, or despair, as some mysterious power determines.

At three-and-twenty, diffidence nearly always rules a man's conduct; he is perplexed with a young girl's shyness, a

girl's trouble; he is afraid lest he should express his love ill, sees nothing but difficulties, and takes alarm at them; he would be bolder if he loved less, for he has no confidence in himself, and with a growing sense of the cost of happiness comes a conviction that the woman he loves cannot easily be won; perhaps, too, he is giving himself up too entirely to his own pleasure, and fears that he can give none; and when, for his misfortune, his idol inspires him with awe, he worships in secret and afar, and unless his love is guessed, it dies away. Then it often happens that one of these dead early loves lingers on, bright with illusions in many a young heart. What man is there but keeps within him these virgin memories that grow fairer every time they rise before him, memories that hold up to him the ideal of perfect bliss? Such recollections are like children who die in the flower of childhood, before their parents have known anything of them but their smiles.

So M. de Nueil came home from Courcelles, the victim of a mood fraught with desperate resolutions. Even now he felt that Mme. de Beauséant was one of the conditions of his existence, and that death would be preferable to life without her. He was still young enough to feel the tyrannous fascination which fully-developed womanhood exerts over immature and impassioned natures; and, consequently, he was to spend one of those stormy nights when a young man's thoughts travel from happiness to suicide and back again—nights in which youth rushes through a lifetime of bliss and falls asleep from sheer exhaustion. Fateful nights are they, and the worst misfortune that can happen is to awake a philosopher afterwards. M. de Nueil was far too deeply in love to sleep; he rose and betook to inditing letters, but none of them were satisfactory, and he burned them all.

The next day he went to Courcelles to make the circuit of her garden walls, but he waited till nightfall; he was afraid that she might see him. The instinct that led him to act in this way arose out of so obscure a mood of the soul, that none but a young man, or a man in like case, can fully understand its mute ecstasies and its vagaries, matter to set those people who are lucky enough to see life only in its matter-of-fact aspect shrugging their shoulders. After painful hesitation, Gaston wrote to Mme. de Beauséant. Here is the letter, which may serve as a sample of the epistolary style peculiar to lovers, a performance which, like the drawings prepared with great secrecy by children for the birthdays of father or mother, is found insufferable by every mortal except the recipients:—

"Madame,—Your power over my heart, my soul, myself, is so great that my fate depends wholly upon you to-day. Do not throw this letter into the fire; be so kind as to read it through. Perhaps you may pardon the opening sentence when you see that it is no commonplace, selfish declaration, but that it expresses a simple fact. Perhaps you may feel moved, because I ask for so little, by the submission of one who feels himself so much beneath you, by the influence that your decision will exercise upon my life. At my age, madame, I only know how to love, I am utterly ignorant

of ways of attracting and winning a woman's love, but in my own heart I know raptures of adoration of her. I am irresistibly drawn to you by the great happiness that I feel through you; my thoughts turn to you with the selfish instinct which bids us draw nearer to the fire of life when we find it. I do not imagine that I am worthy of you; it seems impossible that I, young, ignorant, and shy, could bring you one-thousandth part of the happiness that I drink in at the sound of your voice and the sight of you. For me you are the only woman in the world. I cannot imagine life without you, so I have made up my mind to leave France, and to risk my life till I lose it in some desperate enterprise, in the Indies, in Africa, I care not where. How can I quell a love that knows no limits save by opposing to it something as infinite? Yet, if you will allow me to hope, not to be yours, but to win your friendship, I will stay. Let me come, not so very often, if you require it, to spend a few such hours with you as those stolen hours of yesterday. The keen delight of that brief happiness, to be cut short at the least over-ardent word from me, will suffice to enable me to endure the boiling torrent in my veins. Have I presumed too much upon your generosity by this entreaty to suffer an intercourse in which all the gain is mine alone? You could find ways of showing the world, to which you sacrifice so much, that I am nothing to you; you are so clever and so proud! What have you to fear? If I could only lay bare my heart to you at this moment, to convince you that it is with no lurking afterthought that I make this humble request! Should I have told you that my love was boundless, while I prayed you to grant me friendship, if I had any hope of your sharing this feeling in the depths of my soul? No, while I am with you, I will be whatever you will, if only I may be with you. If you refuse (as you have the power to refuse), I will not utter one murmur, I will go. And if, at a later day, any other woman should enter into my life, you will have proof that you were right; but if I am faithful till death, you may feel some regret perhaps. The hope of causing you a regret will soothe my agony, and that thought shall be the sole revenge of a slighted heart. . . ."

Only those who have passed through all the exceeding tribulations of youth, who have seized on all the chimeras with two white pinions, the nightmare fancies at the disposal of a fervid imagination, can realize the horrors that seized upon Gaston de Nueil when he had reason to suppose that his ultimatum was in Mme. de Beauséant's hands. He saw the Vicomtesse, wholly untouched, laughing at his letter and his love, as those can laugh who have ceased to believe in love. He could have wished to have his letter back again. It was an absurd letter. There were a thousand and one things, now that he came to think of it, that he might have said, things infinitely better and more moving than those stilted phrases of his, those accursed, sophisticated, pretentious, fine-spun phrases, though, luckily, the punctuation had been pretty bad, and the lines shockingly crooked. He tried not to think, not to feel; but he felt and thought, and was wretched. If he had been thirty years old, he might have got drunk, but the

innocence of three-and-twenty knew nothing of the resources of opium nor of the expedients of advanced civilization. Nor had he at hand one of those good friends of the Parisian pattern who understand so well how to say *Pœte, non dolet!* by producing a bottle of champagne, or alleviate the agony of suspense by carrying you off somewhere to make a night of it. Capital fellows are they, always in low water when you are in funds, always off to some watering-place when you go to look them up, always with some bad bargain in horse-flesh to sell you; it is true, that when you want to borrow of them, they have always just lost their last louis at play; but in all other respects they are the best fellows on earth, always ready to embark with you on one of the steep downgrades where you lose your time, your soul, and your life!

At length M. de Nueil received a missive through the instrumentality of Jacques, a letter that bore the arms of Burgundy on the scented seal, a letter written on vellum notepaper.

He rushed away at once to lock himself in, and read and re-read *her* letter:—

"You are punishing me very severely, monsieur, both for the friendliness of my effort to spare you a rebuff, and for the attraction which intellect always has for me. I put confidence in the generosity of youth, and you have disappointed me. And yet, if I did not speak unreservedly (which would have been perfectly ridiculous), at any rate I spoke frankly of my position, so that you might imagine that I was not to be touched by a young soul. My distress is the keener for my interest in you. I am naturally tenderhearted and kindly, but circumstances force me to act unkindly. Another woman would have flung your letter, unread, into the fire; I read it, and I am answering it. My answer will make it clear to you that while I am not untouched by the expression of this feeling which I have inspired, albeit unconsciously, I am still far from sharing it, and the step which I am about to take will show you still more plainly that I mean what I say. I wish besides, to use, for your welfare, that authority, as it were, which you give me over your life; and I desire to exercise it this once to draw aside the veil from your eyes.

"I am nearly thirty years old, monsieur; you are barely two-and-twenty. You yourself cannot know what your thoughts will be at my age. The vows that you make so lightly to-day may seem a very heavy burden to you then. I am quite willing to believe that at this moment you would give me your whole life without a regret, you would even be ready to die for a little brief happiness; but at the age of thirty, experience will take from you the very power of making daily sacrifices for my sake, and I myself should feel deeply humiliated if I accepted them. A day would come when everything, even Nature, would bid you leave me, and I have already told you that death is preferable to desertion. Misfortune has taught me to calculate; as you see, I am arguing perfectly dispassionately. You force me to tell you that I have no love for you; I ought not to love, I cannot, and I will not. It is too late to yield, as women yield, to a blind unreasoning impulse of the heart, too late to be the mistress whom you seek. My consola-

tions spring from God, not from earth. Ah, and besides, with the melancholy insight of disappointed love, I read hearts too clearly to accept your proffered friendship. It is only instinct. I forgive the boyish ruse, for which you are not responsible as yet. In the name of this passing fancy of yours, for the sake of your career and my own peace of mind, I bid you stay in your own country; you must not spoil a fair and honorable life for an illusion which, by its very nature, cannot last. At a later day, when you have accomplished your real destiny, in the fully developed manhood that awaits you, you will appreciate this answer of mine, though to-day it may be that you blame its hardness. You will turn with pleasure to an old woman whose friendship will certainly be sweet and precious to you then; a friendship untried by the extremes of passion and the disenchanting processes of life; a friendship which noble thoughts and thoughts of religion will keep pure and sacred. Farewell; do my bidding with the thought that your success will bring a gleam of pleasure into my solitude, and only think of me as we think of absent friends."

Gaston de Nueil read the letter, and wrote the following lines:—

"MADAME,—If I could cease to love you, to take the chances of becoming an ordinary man which you hold out to me, you must admit that I should thoroughly deserve my fate. No, I shall not do as you bid me; the oath of fidelity which I swear to you shall only be absolved by death. Ah! take my life, unless indeed you do not fear to carry a remorse all through your own——"

When the man returned from his errand, M. de Nueil asked him with whom he left the note?

"I gave it to Mme. la Vicomtesse herself, sir; she was in her carriage and just about to start."

"For the town?"

"I don't think so, sir. Mme. la Vicomtesse had post-horses."

"Ah! then she is going away," said the Baron.

"Yes, sir," the man answered.

Gaston de Nueil at once prepared to follow Mme. de Beauséant. She led the way as far as Geneva, without a suspicion that he followed. And he? Amid the many thoughts that assailed him during that journey, one all-absorbing problem filled his mind—"Why did she go away?" Theories grew thickly on such ground for supposition, and naturally he inclined to the one that flattered his hopes—"If the Vicomtesse cares for me, a clever woman would, of course, choose Switzerland, where nobody knows either of us, in preference to France, where she would find censorious critics."

An impassioned lover of a certain stamp would not feel attracted to a woman clever enough to choose her own ground; such women are too clever. However, there is nothing to prove that there was any truth in Gaston's supposition.

The Vicomtesse took a small house by the side of the lake. As soon as she was installed in it, Gaston came one summer evening in the twilight. Jacques, that flunkey in grain, showed no sign of surprise, and announced *M. le Baron de*

Nueil like a discreet domestic well acquainted with good society. At the sound of the name, at the sight of its owner, Mme. de Beauséant let her book fall from her hands; her surprise gave him time to come close to her, and to say in tones that sounded like music in her ears—

"What joy it was to me to take the horses that brought you on this journey!"

To have the inmost desires of the heart so fulfilled! Where is the woman who could resist such happiness as this? An Italian woman, one of those divine creatures who, psychologically, are as far removed from the Parisian as if they lived at the Antipodes, a being who would be regarded as profoundly immoral on this side of the Alps, an Italian (to resume) made the following comment on some French novels which she had been reading. "I cannot see," she remarked, "why these poor lovers take such a time over coming to an arrangement which ought to be the affair of a single morning." Why should not the novelist take a hint from this worthy lady, and refrain from exhausting the theme and the reader? Some few passages of coquetry it would certainly be pleasant to give in outline; the story of Mme. de Beauséant's demurs and sweet delayings, that, like the vestal virgins of antiquity, she might fall gracefully, and by lingering over the innocent raptures of first love draw from it its utmost strength and sweetness. M. de Nueil was at an age when a man is the dupe of these caprices, of the fence which women delight to prolong; either to dictate their own terms, or to enjoy the sense of their power yet longer, knowing instinctively as they do that it must soon grow less. But, after all, these little boudoir protocols, less numerous than those of the Congress of London, are too small to be worth mention in the history of this passion.

For three years Mme. de Beauséant and M. de Nueil lived in the villa on the lake of Geneva. They lived quite alone, received no visitors, caused no talk, rose late, went out together upon the lake, knew, in short, the happiness of which we all of us dream. It was a simple little house, with green shutters, and broad balconies shaded with awnings, a house contrived of set purpose for lovers, with its white couches, soundless carpets, and fresh hangings, everything within it reflecting their joy. Every window looked out on some new view of the lake; in the far distance lay the mountains, fantastic visions of changing color and evanescent cloud; above them spread the sunny sky, before them stretched the broad sheet of water, never the same in its fitful changes. All their surroundings seemed to dream for them, all things smiled upon them.

Then weighty matters recalled M. de Nueil to France. His father and brother died, and he was obliged to leave Geneva. The lovers bought the house; and if they could have had their way, they would have removed the hills piece-meal, drawn off the lake with a siphon, and taken everything away with them.

Mme. de Beauséant followed M. de Nueil. She realized her property, and bought a considerable estate near Manerville, adjoining Gaston's lands, and here they lived together; Gaston very graciously giving up Manerville to his

mother for the present in consideration of the bachelor freedom in which she left him.

Mme. de Beauséant's estate was close to a little town in one of the most picturesque spots in the valley of the Auge. Here the lovers raised barriers between themselves and social intercourse, barriers which no creature could overleap, and here the happy days of Switzerland were lived over again. For nine whole years they knew happiness which it serves no purpose to describe; happiness which may be divined from the outcome of the story by those whose souls can comprehend poetry and prayer in their infinite manifestations.

All this time Mme. de Beauséant's husband, the present Marquis (his father and elder brother having died), enjoyed the soundest health. There is no better aid to life than a certain knowledge that our demise would confer a benefit on some fellow-creature. M. de Beauséant was one of those ironical and wayward beings who, like holders of life-annuities, wake with an additional sense of relish every morning to a consciousness of good health. For the rest, he was a man of the world, somewhat methodical and ceremonious, and a calculator of consequences, who could make a declaration of love as quietly as a lackey announces that "Madame is served."

This brief biographical notice of his lordship the Marquis de Beauséant is given to explain the reasons why it was impossible for the Marquise to marry M. de Nueil.

So, after a nine years' lease of happiness, the sweetest agreement to which a woman ever put her hand, M. de Nueil and Mme. de Beauséant were still in a position quite as natural and quite as false as at the beginning of their adventure. And yet they had reached a fatal crisis, which may be stated as clearly as any problem in mathematics.

Mme. la Comtesse de Nueil, Gaston's mother, a strait-laced and virtuous person, who had made the late Baron happy in strictly legal fashion, would never consent to meet Mme. de Beauséant. Mme. de Beauséant quite understood that the worthy dowager must of necessity be her enemy, and that she would try to draw Gaston from his unhallowed and immoral way of life. The Marquise de Beauséant would willingly have sold her property and gone back to Geneva, but she could not bring herself to do it; it would mean that she distrusted M. de Nueil. Moreover, he had taken a great fancy to this very Valleroy estate, where he was making plantations and improvements. She would not deprive him of a piece of pleasurable routine work, such as women always wish for their husbands, and even for their lovers.

A Mlle. de Rodière, twenty-two years of age, an heiress with a rent-roll of forty thousand livres, had come to live in the neighborhood. Gaston always met her at Manerville whenever he was obliged to go thither. These various personages being to each other as the terms of a proportion sum, the following letter will throw light on the appalling problem which Mme. de Beauséant had been trying for the past month to solve:—

"My beloved angel, it seems like nonsense, does it not, to write to you when there is nothing to keep us apart, when

a caress so often takes the place of words, and words too are caresses? Ah, well, no love. There are some things that a woman cannot say when she is face to face with the man she loves; at the bare thought of them her voice fails her, and the blood goes back to her heart; she has no strength, no intelligence left. It hurts me to feel like this when you are near me, and it happens often. I feel that my heart should be wholly sincere for you; that I should disguise no thought, however transient, in my heart; and I love the sweet carelessness, which suits me so well, too much to endure this embarrassment and constraint any longer. So I will tell you about my anguish—yes, it is anguish. Listen to me! do not begin with the little 'Tut, tut, tut,' that you use to silence me, an impertinence that I love, because anything from you pleases me. Dear soul from heaven, wedded to mine, let me first tell you that you have effaced all memory of the pain that once was crushing the life out of me. I did not know what love was before I knew you. Only the candor of your beautiful young life, only the purity of that great soul of yours, could satisfy the requirements of an exacting woman's heart. Dear love, how very often I have thrilled with joy to think that in these nine long, swift years, my jealousy has not been once awakened. All the flowers of your soul have been mine, all your thoughts. There has not been the faintest cloud in our heaven; we have not known what sacrifice is; we have always acted on the impulse of our hearts. I have known happiness, infinite for a woman. Will the tears that drench this sheet tell you all my gratitude? I could wish that I had knelt to write the words!—Well, out of this felicity has arisen torture more terrible than the pain of desertion. Dear, there are very deep recesses in a woman's heart; how deep in my own heart, I did not know myself until to-day, as I did not know the whole extent of love. The greatest misery which could overwhelm us is a light burden compared with the mere thought of harm for him whom we love. And how if we cause the harm, is it not enough to make one die? . . . This is the thought that is weighing upon me. But it brings in its train another thought that is heavier far, a thought that tarnishes the glory of love, and slays it, and turns it into a humiliation which sullies life as long as it lasts. You are thirty years old; I am forty. What dread this difference in age calls up in a woman who loves! It is possible that, first of all unconsciously, afterwards in earnest, you have felt the sacrifices that you have made by renouncing all in the world for me. Perhaps you have thought of your future from the social point of view, of the marriage which would, of course, increase your fortune, and give you avowed happiness and children who would inherit your wealth; perhaps you have thought of reappearing in the world, and filling your place there honorably. And then, if so, you must have repressed those thoughts, and felt glad to sacrifice heiress and fortune and a fair future to me without my knowledge. In your young man's generosity, you must have resolved to be faithful to the vows which bind us each to each in the sight of God. My past pain has risen up before your mind, and the misery from which you rescued me has been my protection. To owe your love to your pity! The

thought is even more painful to me than the fear of spoiling your life for you. The man who can bring himself to stab his mistress is very charitable if he gives her her deathblow while she is happy and ignorant of evil, while illusions are in full blossom. . . . Yes, death is preferable to the two thoughts which have secretly saddened the hours for several days. To-day, when you asked, 'What ails you?' so tenderly, the sound of your voice made me shiver. I thought that, after your wont, you were reading my very soul, and I waited for your confidence to come, thinking that my presentiments had come true, and that I had guessed at all that was going on in your mind. Then I began to think over certain little things that you always do for me, and I thought I could see in you the sort of affectation by which a man betrays a consciousness that his loyalty is becoming a burden. And in that moment I paid very dear for my happiness. I felt that Nature always demands the price for the treasure called love. Briefly, has not fate separated us? Can you have said, 'Sooner or later I must leave poor Claire; why not separate in time?' I read that thought in the depths of your eyes, and went away to cry by myself. Hiding my tears from you! the first tears that I have shed for sorrow for these ten years; I am too proud to let you see them, but I did not reproach you in the least.

"Yes, you are right. I ought not to be so selfish as to bind your long and brilliant career to my so-soon outworn life. . . . And yet—how if I have been mistaken? How if I have taken your love melancholy for a deliberation? Oh, my love, do not leave me in suspense; punish this jealous wife of yours, but give her back the sense of her love and yours; the whole human lies in that—that consciousness sanctifies everything.

"Since your mother came, since you paid a visit to Mlle. de Rodière, I have been gnawed by doubts dishonoring to us both. Make me suffer for this, but do not deceive me; I want to know everything that your mother said and that you think! If you have hesitated between some alternative and me, I give you back your liberty. . . . I will not let you know what happens to me; I will not shed tears for you to see; only —I will not see you again. . . . Ah! I cannot go on, my heart is breaking . . .

. . . . . .

I have been sitting benumbed and stupid for some moments. Dear love, I do not find that any feeling of pride rises against you; you are so kind-hearted, so open; you would find it impossible to hurt me or to deceive me; and you will tell me the truth, however cruel it may be. Do you wish me to encourage your confession? Well, then, heart of mine, I shall find comfort in a woman's thought. Has not the youth of your being been mine, your sensitive, wholly gracious, beautiful, and delicate youth? No woman shall find henceforth the Gaston whom I have known, nor the delicious happiness that he has given me. . . . No; you will never love again as you have loved, as you love me now; no, I shall never have a rival, it is impossible. There will be no bitterness in my memories of our love, and I shall think of nothing else. It is out of your power to enchant any woman henceforth by the childish provocations, the charming ways of a young heart, the soul's

winning charm, the body's grace, the swift communion of rapture, the whole divine cortège of young love, in fine.

"Oh, you are a man now, you will obey your destiny, weighing and considering all things. You will have cares, and anxieties, and ambitions, and concerns that will rob *her* of the unchanging smile that made your lips fair for me. The tones that were always so sweet for me will be troubled at times; and your eyes that lighted up with radiance from heaven at the sight of me, will often be lusterless for *her*. And besides, as it is impossible to love you as I love you, you will never care for that woman as you have cared for me. She will never keep a constant watch over herself as I have done; she will never study your happiness at every moment with an intuition which has never failed me. Ah, yes, the man, the heart and soul, which I shall have known will exist no longer. I shall bury him deep in my memory, that I may have the joy of him still; I shall live happy in that fair past life of ours, a life hidden from all but our inmost selves.

"Dear treasure of mine, if all the while no least thought of liberty has risen in your mind, if my love is no burden on you, if my fears are chimerical, if I am still your Eve—the one woman in the world for you—come to me as soon as you have read this letter, come quickly! Ah, in one moment I will love you more than I have ever loved you, I think, in these nine years. After enduring the needless torture of these doubts of which I am accusing myself, every added day of love, yes, every single day, will be a whole lifetime of bliss. So speak, and speak openly; do not deceive me, it would be a crime. Tell me, do you wish for your liberty? Have you thought of all that a man's life means? Is there any regret in your mind? That *I* should cause you a regret! I should die of it. I have said it: I love you enough to set your happiness above mine, your life before my own. Leave on one side, if you can, the wealth of memories of our nine years' happiness, that they may not influence your decision, but speak! I submit myself to you as to God, the one Consoler who remains if you forsake me."

When Mme. de Beauséant knew that her letter was in M. de Nueil's hands, she sank in such utter prostration, the over-pressure of many thoughts so numbed her faculties, that she seemed almost drowsy. At any rate, she was suffering from a pain not always proportioned in its intensity to a woman's strength; pain which women alone know. And while the unhappy Marquise awaited her doom, M. de Nueil, reading her letter, felt that he was "in a very difficult position," to use the expression that young men apply to a crisis of this kind.

By this time he had all but yielded to his mother's importunities and to the attractions of Mlle. de la Rodière, a somewhat insignificant, pink-and-white young person, as straight as a poplar. It is true that, in accordance with the rules laid down for marriageable young ladies, she scarcely opened her mouth, but her rent-roll of forty thousand livres spoke quite sufficiently for her. Mme. de Nueil, with a mother's sincere affection, tried to entangle her son in virtuous courses. She called his attention to

the fact that it was a flattering distinction to be preferred by Mlle. de la Rodière, who had refused so many great matches; it was quite time, she urged, that he should think of his future, such a good opportunity might not repeat itself, some day he would have eighty thousand livres of income from land; money made anything bearable; if Mme. de Beauséant loved him for his own sake, she ought to be the first to urge him to marry. In short, the well-intentioned mother forgot no arguments which the feminine intellect can bring to bear upon the masculine mind, and by these means she had brought her son into a wavering condition.

Mme. de Beauséant's letter arrived just as Gaston's love of her was holding out against the temptations of a settled life conformable to received ideas. That letter decided the day. He made up his mind to break off with the Marquise and to marry.

"One must live a man's life," said he to himself.

Then followed some inkling of the pain that this decision would give to Mme. de Beauséant. The man's vanity and the lover's conscience further exaggerated this pain, and a sincere pity for her seized upon him. All at once the immensity of the misery became apparent to him, and he thought it necessary and charitable to deaden the deadly blow. He hoped to bring Mme. de Beauséant to a calm frame of mind by gradually reconciling her to the idea of separation; while Mlle. de la Rodière, always like a shadowy third between them, should be sacrificed to her at first, only to be imposed upon her later. His marriage should take place later, in obedience to Mme. de Beauséant's expressed wish. He went so far as to enlist the Marquise's nobleness and pride and all the great qualities of her nature to help him to succeed in this compassionate design. He would write a letter at once to allay her suspicions. *A letter!* For a woman with the most exquisite feminine perception, as well as the intuition of passionate love, a letter in itself was a sentence of death.

So when Jacques came and brought Mme. de Beauséant a sheet of paper folded in a triangle, she trembled, poor woman, like a snared swallow. A mysterious sensation of physical cold spread from head to foot, wrapping her about in an icy winding sheet. If he did not rush to her feet, if he did not come to her in tears, and pale, and like a lover, she knew that all was lost. And yet, so many hopes are there in the heart of a woman who loves, that she is only slain by stab after stab, and loves on till the last drop of life-blood drains away.

"Does madame need anything?" Jacques asked gently, as he went away.

"No," she said.

"Poor fellow!" she thought, brushing a tear from her eyes, "he guesses my feelings, servant though he is!"

She read: "My beloved, you are inventing idle terrors for yourself . . ." The Marquise gazed at the words, and a thick mist spread before her eyes. A voice in her heart cried, "He lies!"—Then she glanced down the page with the clairvoyant eagerness of passion, and read these words at the foot, *"Nothing has been decided as yet . . ."* Turning to the other side with convulsive quickness, she saw the mind of the writer distinctly through the intricacies of the

wording; this was no spontaneous outburst of love. She crushed it in her fingers, twisted it, tore it with her teeth, flung it in the fire, and cried aloud, "Ah! base that he is! I was his, and he had ceased to love me!"

She sank half dead upon the couch.

M. de Nueil went out as soon as he had written his letter. When he came back, Jacques met him on the threshold with a note. "Madame la Marquise has left the château," said the man.

M. de Nueil, in amazement, broke the seal and read:—

"MADAME,—If I could cease to love you, to take the chances of becoming an ordinary man which you hold out to me, you must admit that I should thoroughly deserve my fate. No, I shall not do as you bid me; the oath of fidelity which I swear to you shall only be absolved by death. Ah! take my life, unless indeed you do not fear to carry a remorse all through your own . . ."

It was his own letter, written to the Marquise as she set out for Geneva nine years before. At the foot of it Claire de Bourgogne had written, "Monsieur, you are free."

M. de Nueil went to his mother at Manerville. In less than three weeks he married Mlle. Stéphanie de la Rodière.

If this commonplace story of real life ended here, it would be to some extent a sort of mystification. The first man you meet can tell you a better. But the widespread fame of the catastrophe (for, unhappily, this is a true tale), and all the memories which it may arouse in those who have known the divine delights of infinite passion, and lost them by their own deed, or through the cruelty of fate,—these things may perhaps shelter the story from criticism.

Mme. la Marquise de Beauséant never left Valleroy after her parting from M. de Nueil. After his marriage she still continued to live there, for some inscrutable woman's reason; any woman is at liberty to assign the one which most appeals to her. Claire de Bourgogne lived in such complete retirement that none of the servants, save Jacques and her own woman, ever saw their mistress. She required absolute silence all about her, and only left her room to go to the chapel on the Valleroy estate, whither a neighboring priest came to say mass every morning.

The Comte de Nueil sank a few days after his marriage into something like conjugal apathy, which might be interpreted to mean happiness or unhappiness equally easily.

"My son is perfectly happy," his mother said everywhere.

Mme. Gaston de Nueil, like a great many young women, was a rather colorless character, sweet and passive. A month after her marriage she had expectations of becoming a mother. All this was quite in accordance with ordinary views. M. de Nueil was very nice to her; but two months after his separation from the Marquise, he grew notably thoughtful and abstracted. But then he always had been serious, his mother said.

After seven months of this tepid happiness, a little thing occurred, one of those seemingly small matters which imply such great development of thought and such widespread trouble of soul, that

only the bare fact can be recorded; the interpretation of it must be left to the fancy of each individual mind. One day, when M. de Nueil had been shooting over the lands of Manerville and Valleroy, he crossed Mme. de Beauséant's park on his way home, summoned Jacques, and when the man came, asked him, "Whether the Marquise was as fond of game as ever?"

Jacques answering in the affirmative, Gaston offered him a good round sum (accompanied by plenty of specious reasoning) for a very little service. Would he set aside for the Marquise the game that the Count would bring? It seemed to Jacques to be a matter of no great importance whether the partridge on which his mistress dined had been shot by her keeper or by M. de Nueil, especially since the latter particularly wished that the Marquise should know nothing about it.

"It was killed on her land," said the Count, and for some days Jacques lent himself to the harmless deceit. Day after day M. de Nueil went shooting, and came back at dinner-time with an empty bag. A whole week went by in this way. Gaston grew bold enough to write a long letter to the Marquise, and had it conveyed to her. It was returned to him unopened. The Marquise's servant brought it back about nightfall. The Count, sitting in the drawing-room listening, while his wife at the piano mangled a *Caprice* of Hérold's, suddenly sprang up and rushed out to the Marquise, as if he were flying to an assignation. He dashed through a well-known gap into the park, and went slowly along the avenues, stopping now and again for a little to still the loud beating of his heart. Smothered sounds as he came nearer the château told him that the servants must be at supper, and he went straight to Mme. de Beauséant's room.

Mme. de Beauséant never left her bedroom. M. de Nueil could gain the doorway without making the slightest sound. There, by the light of two wax candles, he saw the thin, white Marquise in a great armchair; her head was bowed, her hands hung listlessly, her eyes gazing fixedly at some object which she did not seem to see. Her whole attitude spoke of hopeless pain. There was a vague something like hope in her bearing, but it was impossible to say whither Claire de Bourgogne was looking—forwards to the tomb or backwards into the past. Perhaps M. de Nueil's tears glittered in the deep shadows; perhaps his breathing sounded faintly, perhaps unconsciously he trembled, or again it may have been impossible that he should stand there, his presence unfelt by that quick sense which grows to be an instinct, the glory, the delight, the proof of perfect love. However it was, Mme. de Beauséant slowly turned her face towards the doorway, and beheld her lover of bygone days. Then Gaston de Nueil came forward a few paces.

"If you come any further, sir," exclaimed the Marquise, growing paler, "I shall fling myself out of the window!"

She sprang to the window, flung it open, and stood with one foot on the ledge, her hand upon the iron balustrade, her face turned towards Gaston.

"Go out! go out!" she cried, "or I will throw myself over."

At that dreadful cry the servants began to stir, and M. de Nueil fled like a criminal.

When he reached his home again he wrote a few lines and gave them to his own man, telling him to give the letter himself into Mme. de Beauséant's hands, and to say that it was a matter of life and death for his master. The messenger went. M. de Nueil went back to the drawing-room where his wife was still murdering the *Caprice*, and sat down to wait till the answer came. An hour later, when the *Caprice* had come to an end, and the husband and wife sat in silence on opposite sides of the hearth, the man came back from Valleroy and gave his master his own letter, unopened.

M. de Nueil went into a small room beyond the drawing-room, where he had left his rifle, and shot himself.

The swift and fatal ending of the drama, contrary as it is to all the habits of young France, is only what might have been expected. Those who have closely observed, or known for themselves by delicious experience, all that is meant by the perfect union of two beings, will understand Gaston de Nueil's suicide perfectly well. A woman does not bend and form herself in a day to the caprices of passion. The pleasure of loving, like some rare flower, needs the most careful ingenuity of culture. Time alone, and two souls attuned each to each, can discover all its resources, and call into being all the tender and delicate delights for which we are steeped in a thousand superstitions, imagining them to be inherent in the heart that lavishes them upon us. It is this wonderful response of one nature to another, this religious belief, this certainty of finding peculiar or excessive happiness in the presence of one we love, that accounts in part for perdurable attachments and long-lived passion. If a woman possesses the genius of her sex, love never comes to be a matter of use and wont. She brings all her heart and brain to love, clothes her tenderness in forms so varied, there is such art in her most natural moments, or so much nature in her art, that in absence her memory is almost as potent as her presence. All other women are as shadows compared with her. Not until we have lost or known the dread of losing a love so vast and glorious, do we prize it at its just worth. And if a man who has once possessed this love shuts himself out from it by his own act and deed, and sinks to some loveless marriage; if by some incident, hidden in the obscurity of married life, the woman with whom he hoped to know the same felicity makes it clear that it will never be revived for him; if, with the sweetness of divine love still on his lips, he has dealt a deadly wound to *her*, his wife in truth, whom he forsook for a social chimera,—then he must either die or take refuge in a materialistic, selfish, and heartless philosophy, from which impassioned souls shrink in horror.

As for Mme. de Beauséant, she doubtless did not imagine that her friend's despair could drive him to suicide, when he had drunk deep of love for nine years. Possibly she may have thought that she alone was to suffer. At any rate, she did quite rightly to refuse the most humiliating of all positions; a wife may stoop for weighty social reasons to a kind of compromise which a mistress is bound to hold in abhorrence, for in the purity of her passion lies all its justification.

Farewell

To Prince Friedrich von Schwarzenberg

"Come, Deputy of the Center, come along! We shall have to mend our pace if we mean to sit down to dinner when everyone else does, and that's a fact! Hurry up! Jump, Marquis! That's it! Well done! You are bounding over the furrows just like a stag!"

These words were uttered by a sportsman seated much at his ease on the outskirts of the Forêt de l'Isle-Adam; he had just finished an Havannah cigar, which he had smoked while he waited for his companion, who had evidently been straying about for some time among the forest undergrowth. Four panting dogs by the speaker's side likewise watched the progress of the personage for whose benefit the remarks were made. To make their sarcastic import fully clear, it should be added that the second sportsman was both short and stout; his ample girth indicated a truly magisterial corpulence, and in consequence his progress across the furrows was by no means easy. He was striding over a vast field of stubble; the dried corn-stalks underfoot added not a little to the difficulties of his passage, and to add to his discomforts, the genial influence of the sun that slanted into his eyes brought great drops of perspiration into his face. The uppermost thought in his mind being a strong desire to keep his balance, he lurched to and fro much like a coach jolted over an atrocious road.

It was one of those September days of almost tropical heat that finishes the work of summer and ripens the grapes. Such heat forebodes a coming storm; and though as yet there were wide patches of blue between the dark rain-clouds low down on the horizon, pale golden masses were rising and scattering with ominous swiftness from west to east, and drawing a shadowy veil across the sky. The wind was still, save in the upper regions of the air, so that the weight of the atmosphere seemed to compress the steamy heat of the earth into the forest glades. The tall forest trees shut out every breath of air so completely that the little valley across which the sportsman was making his way was as hot as a furnace; the silent forest seemed parched with the fiery heat. Birds and insects were mute; the topmost twigs of the trees swayed with scarcely perceptible motion. Anyone who retains some recollection of the summer of 1819 must surely compassionate the plight of the hapless supporter of the ministry who toiled and sweated over the stubble to rejoin his satirical comrade. That gentleman, as he smoked his cigar, had arrived, by a process of calculation based on the altitude of the sun, to the conclusion that it must be about five o'clock.

"Where the devil are we?" asked the stout sportsman. He wiped his brow as he spoke, and propped himself against a tree in the field opposite his companion, feeling quite unequal to clearing the broad ditch that lay between them.

"And you ask that question of *me!*" retorted the other, laughing from his bed of tall brown grasses on the top of the bank. He flung the end of his cigar into the ditch, exclaiming, "I swear by

Saint Hubert that no one shall catch *me* risking myself again in a country that I don't know with a magistrate, even if, like you, my dear d'Albon, he happens to be an old schoolfellow."

"Why, Philip, have you really forgotten your own language? You surely must have left your wits behind you in Siberia," said the stouter of the two, with a glance half-comic, half-pathetic at a guide-post distant about a hundred paces from them.

"I understand," replied the one addressed as Philip. He snatched up his rifle, suddenly sprang to his feet, made but one jump of it into the field, and rushed off to the guide-post. "This way, d'Albon, here you are! left about!" he shouted, gesticulating in the direction of the highroad. *"To Baillet and l'Isle-Adam!"* he went on; "so if we go along here, we shall be sure to come upon the crossroad to Cassan."

"Quite right, Colonel," said M. d'Albon, putting the cap with which he had been fanning himself back on his head.

"Then *forward!* highly respected Councilor," returned Colonel Philip, whistling to the dogs, that seemed already to obey him rather than the magistrate their master.—"Are you aware, my lord Marquis, that two leagues yet remain before us?" inquired the malicious soldier. "That village down yonder must be Baillet."

"Great Heavens!" cried the Marquis d'Albon. "Go on to Cassan by all means, if you like; but if you do, you will go alone. I prefer to wait here, storm or no storm; you can send a horse for me from the château. You have been making game of me, Sucy. We were to have a nice day's sport by ourselves; we were not to go very far from Cassan, and go over ground that I knew. Pooh! Instead of a day's fun, you have kept me running like a greyhound since four o'clock this morning, and nothing but a cup or two of milk by way of breakfast. Oh! if ever you find yourself in a court of law, I will take care that the day goes against you if you were in the right a hundred times over."

The dejected sportsman sat himself down on one of the stumps at the foot of the guide-post, disencumbered himself of his rifle and empty game-bag, and heaved a prolonged sigh.

"Oh, France, behold thy Deputies!" laughed Colonel de Sucy. "Poor old d'Albon; if you had spent six months at the other end of Siberia as I did . . ."

He broke off, and his eyes sought the sky, as if the story of his troubles was a secret between himself and God.

"Come, march!" he added. "If you once sit down, it is all over with you."

"I can't help it, Philip! It is such an old habit in a magistrate! I am dead beat, upon my honor. If I had only bagged one hare though!"

Two men more different are seldom seen together. The civilian, a man of forty-two, seemed scarcely more than thirty; while the soldier, at thirty years of age, looked to be forty at the least. Both wore the red rosette that proclaimed them to be officers of the Legion of Honor. A few locks of hair, mingled white and black, like a magpie's wing, had strayed from beneath the Colonel's cap; while thick, fair curls clustered about the magistrate's temples. The Colonel was tall, spare, dried up, but muscular; the lines in his pale face told a tale of vehement passions or of terrible

sorrows; but his comrade's jolly countenance beamed with health, and would have done credit to an Epicurean. Both men were deeply sunburnt. Their high gaiters of brown leather carried souvenirs of every ditch and swamp that they crossed that day.

"Come, come," cried M. de Sucy, "forward! One short hour's march, and we shall be at Cassan with a good dinner before us."

"You never were in love, that is positive," returned the Councilor, with a comically piteous expression. "You are as inexorable as Article 304 of the Penal Code!"

Philip de Sucy shuddered violently. Deep lines appeared in his broad forehead, his face was overcast like the sky above them; but though his features seemed to contract with the pain of an intolerably bitter memory, no tears came to his eyes. Like all men of strong character, he possessed the power of forcing his emotions down into some inner depth, and, perhaps, like many reserved natures, he shrank from laying bare a wound too deep for any words of human speech, and winced at the thought of ridicule from those who do not care to understand. M. d'Albon was one of those who are keenly sensitive by nature to the distress of others, who feel at once the pain they have unwittingly given by some blunder. He respected his friend's mood, rose to his feet, forgot his weariness, and followed in silence, thoroughly annoyed with himself for having touched on a wound that seemed not yet healed.

"Some day I will tell you my story," Philip said at last, wringing his friend's hand, while he acknowledged his dumb repentance with a heartrending glance. "To-day, I cannot."

They walked on in silence. As the Colonel's distress passed off the Councilor's fatigue returned. Instinctively, or rather urged by weariness, his eyes explored the depths of the forest around them; he looked high and low among the trees, and gazed along the avenues, hoping to discover some dwelling where he might ask for hospitality. They reached a place where several roads met; and the Councilor, fancying that he saw a thin film of smoke rising through the trees, made a stand and looked sharply about him. He caught a glimpse of the dark green branches of some firs among the other forest trees, and finally, "A house! a house!" he shouted. No sailor could have raised the cry of "Land ahead!" more joyfully than he.

He plunged at once into undergrowth, somewhat of the thickest; and the Colonel, who had fallen into deep musings, followed him unheedingly.

"I would rather have an omelette here and homemade bread, and a chair to sit down in, than go further for a sofa, truffles, and Bordeaux wine at Cassan."

This burst of enthusiasm on the Councilor's part was caused by the sight of the whitened wall of a house in the distance, standing out in strong contrast against the brown masses of knotted tree-trunks in the forest.

"Aha! This used to be a priory, I should say," the Marquis d'Albon cried once more, as they stood before a grim old gateway. Through the grating they could see the house itself standing in the midst of some considerable extent of park land; from the style of the

architecture it appeared to have been a monastery once upon a time.

"Those knowing rascals of monks knew how to choose a site!"

This last exclamation was caused by the magistrate's amazement at the romantic hermitage before his eyes. The house had been built on a spot half-way up the hillside on the slope below the village of Nerville, which crowned the summit. A huge circle of great oak trees, hundreds of years old, guarded the solitary place from intrusion. There appeared to be about forty acres of the park. The main building of the monastery faced the south, and stood in a space of green meadow, picturesquely intersected by several tiny clear streams, and by larger sheets of water so disposed as to have a natural effect. Shapely trees with contrasting foliage grew here and there. Grottos had been ingeniously contrived; and broad terraced walks, now in ruin, though the steps were broken and the balustrades eaten through with rust, gave to this sylvan Thebaïd a certain character of its own. The art of man and the picturesqueness of nature had wrought together to produce a charming effect. Human passions surely could not cross that boundary of tall oak trees which shut out the sounds of the outer world, and screened the fierce heat of the sun from this forest sanctuary.

"What neglect!" said M. d'Albon to himself, after the first sense of delight in the melancholy aspect of the ruins in the landscape, which seemed blighted by a curse.

It was like some haunted spot, shunned of men. The twisted ivy stems clambered everywhere, hiding everything away beneath a luxuriant green mantle. Moss and lichens, brown and gray, yellow and red, covered the trees with fantastic patches of color, grew upon the benches in the garden, overran the roof and the walls of the house. The window-sashes were weather-worn and warped with age, the balconies were dropping to pieces, the terraces in ruins Here and there the folding shutters hung by a single hinge. The crazy doors would have given way at the first attempt to force an entrance.

Out in the orchard the neglected fruit trees were running to wood, the rambling branches bore no fruit save the glistening mistletoe berries, and tall plants were growing in the garden walks. All this forlornness shed a charm across the picture that wrought on the spectator's mind with an influence like that of some enchanting poem, filling his soul with dreamy fancies. A poet must have lingered there in deep and melancholy musings, marveling at the harmony of this wilderness, where decay had a certain grace of its own.

In a moment a few gleams of sunlight struggled through a rift in the clouds, and a shower of colored light fell over the wild garden. The brown tiles of the roof glowed in the light, the mosses took bright hues, strange shadows played over the grass beneath the trees; the dead autumn tints grew vivid, bright unexpected contrasts were evoked by the light, every leaf stood out sharply in the clear, thin air. Then all at once the sunlight died away, and the landscape that seemed to have spoken grew silent and gloomy again, or rather, it took gray soft tones like the tenderest hues of autumn dusk.

"It is the palace of the Sleeping Beauty," the Councilor said to himself (he had already begun to look at the place from the point of view of an owner of property). "Whom can the place belong to, I wonder. He must be a great fool not to live on such a charming little estate!"

Just at that moment, a woman sprang out from under a walnut tree on the right-hand side of the gateway, and passed before the Councilor as noiselessly and swiftly as the shadow of a cloud. This apparition struck him dumb with amazement.

"Hallo, d'Albon, what is the matter?" asked the Colonel.

"I am rubbing my eyes to find out whether I am awake or asleep," answered the magistrate, whose countenance was pressed against the grating in the hope of catching a second glimpse of the ghost.

"In all probability she is under that fig-tree," he went on, indicating, for Philip's benefit, some branches that overtopped the wall on the left-hand side of the gateway.

"She? Who?"

"Eh! how should I know?" answered M. d'Albon. "A strange-looking woman sprang up there under my very eyes just now," he added, in a low voice; "she looked to me more like a ghost than a living being. She was so slender, light, and shadowy that she might be transparent. Her face was as white as milk, her hair, her eyes, and her dress were black. She gave me a glance as she flitted by. I am not easily frightened, but that cold stony stare of hers froze the blood in my veins."

"Was she pretty?" inquired Philip.

"I don't know. I saw nothing but those eyes in her head."

"The devil take dinner at Cassan!" exclaimed the Colonel; "let us stay here. I am as eager as a boy to see the inside of this queer place. The window-sashes are painted red, do you see? There is a red line round the panels of the doors and the edges of the shutters. It might be the Devil's own dwelling; perhaps he took it over when the monks went out. Now, then, let us give chase to the black and white lady; come along!" cried Philip, with forced gaiety.

He had scarcely finished speaking when the two sportsmen heard a cry as if some bird had been taken in a snare. They listened. There was a sound like the murmur of rippling water, as something forced its way through the bushes; but diligently as they lent their ears, there was no footfall on the path, the earth kept the secret of the mysterious woman's passage, if indeed she had moved from her hiding-place.

"This is very strange!" cried Philip.

Following the wall of the park, the two friends reached before long a forest road leading to the village of Chauvry; they went along this track in the direction of the highway to Paris, and reached another large gateway. Through the railings they had a complete view of the façade of the mysterious house. From this point of view, the dilapidation was still more apparent. Huge cracks had riven the walls of the main body of the house built round three sides of a square Evidently the place was allowed to fall to ruin; there were holes in the roof, broken slates and tiles lay about below. Fallen fruit from the orchard trees was left to rot on the ground; a cow was

grazing over the bowling-green and trampling the flowers in the garden beds; a goat browsed on the green grapes and young vine-shoots on the trellis.

"It is all of a piece," remarked the Colonel. "The neglect is in a fashion systematic." He laid his hand on the chain of the bell-pull, but the bell had lost its clapper. The two friends heard no sound save the peculiar grating creak of the rusty spring. A little door in the wall beside the gateway, though ruinous, held good against all their efforts to force it open.

"Oho! all this is growing very interesting," Philip said to his companion.

"If I were not a magistrate," returned M. d'Albon, "I should think that the woman in black is a witch."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the cow came up to the railings and held out her warm damp nose, as if she were glad of human society. Then a woman, if so indescribable a being could be called a woman, sprang up from the bushes, and pulled at the cord about the cow's neck. From beneath the crimson handkerchief about the woman's head, fair matted hair escaped, something as tow hangs about a spindle. She wore no kerchief at the throat. A coarse black-and-gray striped woolen petticoat, too short by several inches, left her legs bare. She might have belonged to some tribe of Redskins in Fenimore Cooper's novels; for her neck, arms, and ankles looked as if they had been painted brick-red. There was no spark of intelligence in her featureless face; her pale, bluish eyes looked out dull and expressionless from beneath the eyebrows with one or two straggling white hairs on them. Her teeth were prominent and uneven, but white as a dog's.

"Hallo, good woman," called M. de Sucy.

She came slowly up to the railing, and stared at the two sportsmen with a contorted smile painful to see.

"Where are we? What is the name of the house yonder? Whom does it belong to? Who are you? Do you come from hereabouts?"

To these questions, and to a host of others poured out in succession upon her by the two friends, she made no answer save gurgling noises in the throat, more like animal sounds than anything uttered by a human voice.

"Don't you see that she is deaf and dumb?" said M. d'Albon.

"*Minorites!*" the peasant woman said at last.

"Ah! she is right. The house looks as though it might once have been a Minorite convent," he went on.

Again they plied the peasant woman with questions, but, like a wayward child, she colored up, fidgeted with her sabot, twisted the rope by which she held the cow that had fallen to grazing again, stared at the sportsmen, and scrutinized every article of clothing upon them; she gibbered, grunted, and clucked, but no articulate word did she utter.

"Your name?" asked Philip, fixing her with his eyes as if he were trying to bewitch the woman.

"Geneviève," she answered, with an empty laugh.

"The cow is the most intelligent creature we have seen so far," exclaimed the magistrate. "I shall fire a shot, that ought to bring somebody out."

D'Albon had just taken up his rifle when the Colonel put out a hand to stop him, and pointed out the mysterious woman who had aroused such lively curiosity in them. She seemed to be absorbed in deep thought, as she went along a green alley some little distance away, so slowly that the friends had time to take a good look at her. She wore a threadbare black satin gown, her long hair curled thickly over her forehead, and fell like a shawl about her shoulders below her waist. Doubtless she was accustomed to the dishevelment of her locks, for she seldom put back her hair on either side of her brows; but when she did so, she shook her head with a sudden jerk that had not to be repeated to shake away the thick veil from her eyes or forehead. In everything that she did, moreover, there was a wonderful certainty in the working of the mechanism, an unerring swiftness and precision, like that of an animal, well nigh marvelous in a woman.

The two sportsmen were amazed to see her spring up into an apple tree and cling to a bough lightly as a bird. She snatched at the fruit, ate it, and dropped to the ground with the same supple grace that charms us in a squirrel. The elasticity of her limbs took all appearance of awkwardness or effort from her movements. She played about upon the grass, rolling in it as a young child might have done; then, on a sudden, she lay still and stretched out her feet and hands, with the languid natural grace of a kitten dozing in the sun.

There was a threatening growl of thunder far away, and at this she started up on all fours and listened, like a dog who hears a strange footstep. One result of this strange attitude was to separate her thick black hair into two masses, that fell away on either side of her face and left her shoulders bare; the two witnesses of this singular scene wondered at the whiteness of the skin that shone like a meadow daisy, and at the neck that indicated the perfection of the rest of her form.

A wailing cry broke from her; she rose to her feet, and stood upright. Every successive movement was made so lightly, so gracefully, so easily, that she seemed to be no human being, but one of Ossian's maids of the mist. She went across the grass to one of the pools of water, deftly shook off her shoe, and seemed to enjoy dipping her foot, white as marble, in the spring; doubtless it pleased her to make the circling ripples, and watch them glitter like gems. She knelt down by the brink, and played there like a child, dabbling her long tresses in the water, and flinging them loose again to see the water drip from the ends, like a string of pearls in the sunless light.

"She is mad!" cried the Councilor.

A hoarse cry rang through the air; it came from Geneviève, and seemed to be meant for the mysterious woman. She rose to her feet in a moment, flinging back the hair from her face, and then the Colonel and d'Albon could see her features distinctly. As soon as she saw the two friends she bounded to the railings with the swiftness of a fawn.

"Farewell!" she said in low, musical tones, but they could not discover the least trace of feeling, the least idea in the sweet sounds that they had awaited impatiently.

M. d'Albon admired the long lashes,

the thick, dark eyebrows, the dazzling fairness of a skin untinged by any trace of red. Only the delicate blue veins contrasted with that uniform whiteness.

But when the Marquis turned to communicate his surprise at the sight of so strange an apparition, he saw the Colonel stretched on the grass like one dead. M. d'Albon fired his gun into the air, shouted for help, and tried to raise his friend. At the sound of the shot, the strange lady, who had stood motionless by the gate, fled away, crying out like a wounded wild creature, circling round and round in the meadow, with every sign of unspeakable terror.

M. d'Albon heard a carriage rolling along the road to l'Isle-Adam, and waved his handkerchief to implore help. The carriage immediately came towards the Minorite convent, and M. d'Albon recognized neighbors, M. and Mme. de Grandville, who hastened to alight and put their carriage at his disposal. Colonel de Sucy inhaled the salts which Mme. de Grandville happened to have with her; he opened his eyes, looked towards the mysterious figure that still fled wailing through the meadow, and a faint cry of horror broke from him; he closed his eyes again, with a dumb gesture of entreaty to his friends to take him away from this scene. M. and Mme. de Grandville begged the Councilor to make use of their carriage, adding very obligingly that they themselves would walk.

"Who can the lady be?" inquired the magistrate, looking towards the strange figure.

"People think that she comes from Moulins," answered M. de Grandville. "She is a Comtesse de Vandières; she is said to be mad; but as she has only been here for two months, I cannot vouch for the truth of all this hearsay talk."

M. d'Albon thanked M. and Mme. de Grandville, and they set out for Cassan.

"It is she!" cried Philip, coming to himself.

"She? who?" asked d'Albon.

"Stéphanie. . . . Ah! dead and yet living still; still alive, but her mind is gone! I thought the sight would kill me."

The prudent magistrate, recognizing the gravity of the crisis through which his friend was passing, refrained from asking questions or exciting him further, and grew impatient of the length of the way to the château, for the change wrought in the Colonel's face alarmed him. He feared lest the Countess's terrible disease had communicated itself to Philip's brain. When they reached the avenue at l'Isle-Adam, d'Albon sent the servant for the local doctor, so that the Colonel had scarcely been laid in bed before the surgeon was beside him.

"If M. le Colonel had not been fasting, the shock must have killed him," pronounced the leech. "He was overtired, and that saved him," and with a few directions as to the patient's treatment, he went to prepare a composing draught himself. M. de Sucy was better the next morning, but the doctor had insisted on sitting up all night with him.

"I confess, M. le Marquis," the surgeon said, "that I feared for the brain. M. de Sucy has had some very violent shock; he is a man of strong passions, but, with his temperament, the first shock decides everything. He will very likely be out of danger to-morrow."

The doctor was perfectly right. The next day the patient was allowed to see his friend.

"I want you to do something for me, dear d'Albon," Philip said, grasping his friend's hand. "Hasten at once to the Minorite convent, find out everything about the lady whom we saw there, and come back as soon as you can; I shall count the minutes till I see you again."

M. d'Albon called for his horse, and galloped over to the old monastery. When he reached the gateway he found someone standing there, a tall, spare man with a kindly face, who answered in the affirmative when he was asked if he lived in the ruined house. M. d'Albon explained his errand.

"Why, then, it must have been you, sir, who fired that unlucky shot! You all but killed my poor invalid."

"Eh! I fired into the air!"

"If you had actually hit Mme. le Comtesse, you would have done less harm to her."

"Well, well, then, we can neither of us complain, for the sight of the Countess all but killed my friend, M. de Sucy."

"The Baron de Sucy, is it possible?" cried the doctor, clasping his hands. "Has he been in Russia? was he in the Beresina?"

"Yes," answered d'Albon. "He was taken prisoner by the Cossacks and sent to Siberia. He has not been back in this country a twelvemonth."

"Come in, monsieur," said the other, and he led the way to a drawing-room on the ground floor. Everything in the room showed signs of capricious destruction.

Valuable china jars lay in fragments on either side of a clock beneath a glass shade, which had escaped. The silk hangings about the windows were torn to rags, while the muslin curtains were untouched.

"You see about you the havoc wrought by a charming being to whom I have dedicated my life. She is my niece; and though medical science is powerless in her case, I hope to restore her to reason, though the method which I am trying is, unluckily, only possible to the wealthy."

Then, like all who live much alone and daily bear the burden of a heavy trouble, he fell to talk with the magistrate. This is the story that he told, set in order, and with the many digressions made by both teller and hearer omitted.

When, at nine o'clock at night, on the 28th of November, 1812, Marshal Victor abandoned the heights of Studzianka, which he had held through the day, he left a thousand men behind with instructions to protect, till the last possible moment, the two pontoon bridges over the Beresina that still held good. This rearguard was to save if possible an appalling number of stragglers, so numbed with the cold, that they obstinately refused to leave the baggage-wagons. The heroism of the generous band was doomed to fail; for, unluckily, the men who poured down to the eastern bank of the Beresina found carriages, caissons, and all kinds of property which the army had been forced to abandon during its passage on the 27th and 28th days of November. The poor, half-frozen wretches, sunk almost to the level of brutes, finding such unhoped-for riches, bivouacked in the deserted space, laid

hands on the military stores, improvised huts out of the material, lighted fires with anything that would burn, cut up the carcasses of the horses for food, tore out the linings of the carriages, wrapped themselves in them, and lay down to sleep, instead of crossing the Beresina in peace under cover of night—the Beresina that even then had proved, by an incredible fatality, so disastrous to the army. Such apathy on the part of the poor fellows can only be understood by those who remember tramping across those vast deserts of snow, with nothing to quench their thirst but snow, snow for their bed, snow as far as the horizon on every side, and no food but snow, a little frozen beetroot, horse-flesh, or a handful of meal.

The miserable creatures were dropping down, overcome by hunger, thirst, weariness, and sleep, when they reached the shores of the Beresina and found fuel and fire and victuals, countless wagons and tents, a whole improvised town, in short. The whole village of Studzianka had been removed piecemeal from the heights to the plain, and the very perils and miseries of this dangerous and doleful habitation smiled invitingly to the wayfarers, who beheld no prospect beyond it but the awful Russian deserts. A huge hospice, in short, was erected for twenty hours of existence. Only one thought—the thought of rest—appealed to men weary of life or rejoicing in unlooked-for comfort.

They lay right in the line of fire from the cannon of the Russian left; but to that vast mass of human creatures, a patch upon the snow, sometimes dark, sometimes breaking into flame, the indefatigable grape-shot was but one discomfort the more. For them it was only a storm, and they paid the less attention to the bolts that fell among them because there were none to strike down there save dying men, the wounded, or perhaps the dead. Stragglers came up in little bands at every moment. These walking corpses instantly separated, and wandered begging from fire to fire; and meeting, for the most part, with refusals, banded themselves together again, and took by force what they could not otherwise obtain. They were deaf to the voices of their officers prophesying death on the morrow, and spent the energy required to cross the swamp in building shelters for the night and preparing a meal that often proved fatal. The coming death no longer seemed an evil, for it gave them an hour of slumber before it came. Hunger and thirst and cold—these were evils, but not death.

At last wood and fuel and canvas and shelters failed, and hideous brawls began between destitute late comers and the rich already in possession of a lodging. The weaker were driven away, until a few last fugitives before the Russian advance were obliged to make their bed in the snow, and lay down to rise no more.

Little by little the mass of half-dead humanity became so dense, so deaf, so torpid,—or perhaps it should be said so happy—that Marshal Victor, their heroic defender against twenty thousand Russians under Wittgenstein, was actually compelled to cut his way by force through this forest of men, so as to cross the Beresina with the five thousand heroes whom he was leading to the Emperor. The miserable creatures preferred to be trampled and crushed to

death rather than stir from their places, and died without a sound, smiling at the dead ashes of their fires, forgetful of France.

Not before ten o'clock that night did the Duc de Belluno reach the other side of the river. Before committing his men to the pontoon bridges that led to Zembin, he left the fate of the rearguard at Studzianka in Eblé's hands, and to Eblé the survivors of the calamities of the Beresina owed their lives.

About midnight, the great General, followed by a courageous officer, came out of his little hut by the bridge, and gazed at the spectacle of this camp between the bank of the Beresina and the Borizof road to Studzianka. The thunder of the Russian cannonade had ceased. Here and there faces that had nothing human about them were lighted up by countless fires that seemed to grow pale in the glare of the snowfields, and to give no light. Nearly thirty thousand wretches, belonging to every nation that Napoleon had hurled upon Russia, lay there hazarding their lives with the indifference of brute beasts.

"We have all these to save," the General said to his subordinate. "To-morrow morning the Russians will be in Studzianka. The moment they come up we shall have to set fire to the bridge; so pluck up heart, my boy! Make your way out and up yonder through them, and tell General Fournier that he has barely time to evacuate his post and cut his way through to the bridge. As soon as you have seen him set out, follow him down, take some able-bodied men, and set fire to the tents, wagons, caissons, carriages, anything and everything, without pity, and drive these fellows on to the bridge. Compel everything that walks on two legs to take refuge on the other bank. We must set fire to the camp; it is our last resource. If Berthier had let me burn those d——d wagons sooner, no lives need have been lost in the river except my poor pontooners, my fifty heroes, who saved the army, and will be forgotten."

The General passed his hand over his forehead and said no more. He felt that Poland would be his tomb, and foresaw that afterwards no voice would be raised to speak for the noble fellows who had plunged into the stream—into the waters of the Beresina!—to drive in the piles for the bridges. And, indeed, only one of them is living now, or, to be more accurate, starving, utterly forgotten in a country village! The brave officer had scarcely gone a hundred paces towards Studzianka, when General Eblé roused some of his patient pontooners, and began his work of mercy by setting fire to the camp on the side nearest the bridge, so compelling the sleepers to rise and cross the Beresina. Meanwhile the young aide-de-camp, not without difficulty, reached the one wooden house yet left standing in Studzianka.

"So the box is pretty full, is it, messmate?" he said to a man whom he found outside.

"You will be a knowing fellow if you manage to get inside," the officer returned, without turning round or stopping his occupation of hacking at the woodwork of the house with his saber.

"Philip, is that you?" cried the aide-de-camp, recognizing the voice of one of his friends.

"Yes. Aha! is it you, old fellow?" returned M. de Sucy, looking round at

the aide-de-camp, who like himself was not more than twenty-three years old. "I fancied you were on the other side of this confounded river. Do you come to bring us sweetmeats for dessert? You will get a warm welcome," he added, as he tore away a strip of bark from the wood and gave it to his horse by way of fodder.

"I am looking for your Commandant. General Eblé has sent me to tell him to file off to Zembin. You have only just time to cut your way through that mass of dead men; as soon as you get through, I am going to set fire to the place to make them move——"

"You almost make me feel warm! Your news has put me in a fever; I have two friends to bring through. Ah! but for those marmots, I should have been dead before now, old fellow. On their account I am taking care of my horse instead of eating him. But have you a crust about you, for pity's sake? It is thirty hours since I have stowed any victuals. I have been fighting like a madman to keep up a little warmth in my body and what courage I have left."

"Poor Philip! I have nothing—not a scrap!—But is your General in there?"

"Don't attempt to go in. The barn is full of our wounded. Go up a bit higher, and you will see a sort of pigsty to the right—that is where the General is. Good-by, my dear fellow. If ever we meet again in a quadrille in a ball-room in Paris——"

He did not finish the sentence, for the treachery of the northeast wind that whistled about them froze Major Philip's lips, and the aide-de-camp kept moving for fear of being frost-bitten. Silence soon prevailed, scarcely broken by the groans of the wounded in the barn, or the stifled sounds made by M. de Sucy's horse crunching the frozen bark with famished eagerness. Philip thrust his saber into the sheath, caught at the bridle of the precious animal that he had managed to keep for so long, and drew her away from the miserable fodder that she was bolting with apparent relish.

"Come along, Bichette! come along! It lies with you now, my beauty, to save Stéphanie's life. There, wait a little longer, and they will let us lie down and die, no doubt"; and Philip, wrapped in a pelisse, to which doubtless he owed his life and energies, began to run, stamping his feet on the frozen snow to keep them warm. He was scarce five hundred paces away before he saw a great fire blazing on the spot where he had left his carriage that morning with an old soldier to guard it. A dreadful misgiving seized upon him. Many a man under the influence of a powerful feeling during the Retreat summoned up energy for his friend's sake when he would not have exerted himself to save his own life; so it was with Philip. He soon neared a hollow, where he had left a carriage sheltered from the cannonade, a carriage that held a young woman, his playmate in childhood, dearer to him than anyone else on earth.

Some thirty stragglers were sitting round a tremendous blaze, which they kept up with logs of wood, planks wrenched from the floors of the caissons, and wheels, and panels from carriage bodies. These had been, doubtless, among the last to join the sea of fires, huts, and human faces that filled the great furrow in the land between Stud-

zianka and the fatal river, a restless living sea of almost imperceptibly moving figures, that sent up a smothered hum of sound blended with frightful shrieks. It seemed that hunger and despair had driven these forlorn creatures to take forcible possession of the carriage, for the old General and his young wife, whom they had found warmly wrapped in pelisses and traveling cloaks, were now crouching on the earth beside the fire, and one of the carriage doors was broken.

As soon as the group of stragglers round the fire heard the footfall of the Major's horse, a frenzied yell of hunger went up from them. "A horse!" they cried. "A horse!"

All the voices went up as one voice.

"Back! back! Look out!" shouted two or three of them, leveling their muskets at the animal.

"I will pitch you neck and crop into your fire, you blackguards!" cried Philip, springing in front of the mare. "There are dead horses lying up yonder; go and look for them!"

"What a rum customer the officer is!—Once, twice, will you get out of the way?" returned a giant grenadier. "You won't? All right then, just as you please."

A woman's shriek rang out above the report. Luckily, none of the bullets hit Philip; but poor Bichette lay in the agony of death. Three of the men came up and put an end to her with thrusts of the bayonet.

"Cannibals! leave me the rug and my pistols," cried Philip in desperation.

"Oh! the pistols if you like; but as for the rug, there is a fellow yonder who has had nothing to wet his whistle these two days, and is shivering in his coat of cobwebs, and that's our General."

Philip looked up and saw a man with worn-out shoes and a dozen rents in his trousers; the only covering for his head was a ragged foraging cap, white with rime. He said no more after that, but snatched up his pistols.

Five of the men dragged the mare to the fire, and began to cut up the carcass as dexterously as any journeymen butchers in Paris. The scraps of meat were distributed and flung upon the coals, and the whole process was magically swift. Philip went over to the woman who had given the cry of terror when she recognized his danger, and sat down by her side. She sat motionless upon a cushion taken from the carriage, warming herself at the blaze; she said no word, and gazed at him without a smile. He saw beside her the soldier whom he had left mounting guard over the carriage; the poor fellow had been wounded; he had been overpowered by numbers, and forced to surrender to the stragglers who had set upon him, and, like a dog who defends his master's dinner till the last moment, he had taken his share of the spoil, and had made a sort of cloak for himself out of a sheet. At that particular moment he was busy toasting a piece of horseflesh, and in his face the Major saw a gleeful anticipation of the coming feast.

The Comte de Vandières, who seemed to have grown quite childish in the last few days, sat on a cushion close to his wife, and stared into the fire. He was only just beginning to shake off his torpor under the influence of the warmth. He had been no more affected by Philip's arrival and danger than by the fight

and subsequent pillage of his traveling carriage.

At first Sucy caught the young Countess's hand in his, trying to express his affection for her, and the pain that it gave him to see her reduced like this to the last extremity of misery; but he said nothing as he sat by her side on the thawing heap of snow, he gave himself up to the pleasure of the sensation of warmth, forgetful of danger, forgetful of all things else in the world. In spite of himself his face expanded with an almost fatuous expression of satisfaction, and he waited impatiently till the scrap of horseflesh that had fallen to his soldier's share should be cooked. The smell of the charred flesh stimulated his hunger. Hunger clamored within him and silenced his heart, his courage, and his love. He coolly looked round on the results of the spoliation of his carriage. Not a man seated round the fire but had shared the booty, the rugs, cushions, pelisses, dresses,—articles of clothing that belonged to the Count and Countess or to himself. Philip turned to see if anything worth taking was left in the berline. He saw by the light of the flames, gold, and diamonds, and silver lying scattered about; no one had cared to appropriate the least particle. There was something hideous in the silence among those human creatures round the fire; none of them spoke, none of them stirred, save to do such things as each considered necessary for his own comfort.

It was a grotesque misery. The men's faces were warped and disfigured with the cold, and plastered over with a layer of mud; you could see the thickness of the mask by the channel traced down their cheeks by the tears that ran from their eyes, and their long slovenly kept beards added to the hideousness of their appearance. Some were wrapped round in women's shawls, others in horse-cloths, dirty blankets, rags stiffened with melting hoar-frost; here and there a man wore a boot on one foot and a shoe on the other, in fact, there was not one of them but wore some ludicrously odd costume. But the men themselves with such matter for jest about them were gloomy and taciturn.

The silence was unbroken save by the crackling of the wood, the roaring of the flames, the far-off hum of the camp, and the sound of sabers hacking at the carcass of the mare. Some of the hungriest of the men were still cutting tit-bits for themselves. A few miserable creatures, more weary than the others, slept outright; and if they happened to roll into the fire, no one pulled them back. With cut-and-dried logic their fellows argued that if they were not dead, a scorching ought to be sufficient warning to quit and seek out more comfortable quarters. If the poor wretch woke to find himself on fire, he was burned to death, and nobody pitied him. Here and there the men exchanged glances, as if to excuse their indifference by the carelessness of the rest; the thing happened twice under the young Countess's eyes, and she uttered no sound. When all the scraps of horse-flesh had been broiled upon the coals, they were devoured with a ravenous greediness that would have been disgusting in wild beasts.

"And now we have seen thirty infantrymen on one horse for the first time in our lives!" cried the grenadier who had shot the mare, the one solitary joke

that sustained the Frenchmen's reputation for wit.

Before long the poor fellows huddled themselves up in their clothes, and lay down on planks of timber, on anything but the bare snow, and slept—heedless of the morrow. Major de Sucy, having warmed himself and satisfied his hunger, fought in vain against the drowsiness that weighed upon his eyes. During this brief struggle he gazed at the sleeping girl who had turned her face to the fire, so that he could see her closed eyelids and part of her forehead. She was wrapped round in a furred pelisse and a coarse horseman's cloak, her head lay on a blood-stained cushion; a tall astrakhan cap tied over her head by a handkerchief knotted under the chin protected her face as much as possible from the cold, and she had tucked up her feet in the cloak. As she lay curled up in this fashion, she bore no likeness to any creature.

Was this the lowest of camp-followers? Was this the charming woman, the pride of her lover's heart, the queen of many a Parisian ballroom? Alas! even for the eyes of this most devoted friend, there was no discernible trace of womanhood in that bundle of rags and linen, and the cold was mightier than the love in a woman's heart.

Then for the Major the husband and wife came to be like two distant dots seen through the thick veil that the most irresistible kind of slumber spread over his eyes. It all seemed to be part of a dream—the leaping flames, the recumbent figures, the awful cold that lay in wait for them three paces away from the warmth of the fire that glowed for a little while. One thought that could not be stifled haunted Philip—"If I got to sleep, we shall die; I will not sleep," he said to himself.

He slept. After an hour's slumber M. de Sucy was awakened by a hideous uproar and the sound of an explosion. The remembrance of his duty, of the danger of his beloved, rushed upon his mind with a sudden shock. He uttered a cry like the growl of a wild beast. He and his servant stood upright above the rest. They saw a sea of fire in the darkness, and against it moving masses of human figures. Flames were devouring the huts and tents. Despairing shrieks and yelling cries reached their ears; they saw thousands upon thousands of wild and desperate faces; and through this inferno a column of soldiers was cutting its way to the bridge, between two hedges of dead bodies.

"Our rearguard is in full retreat," cried the Major. "There is no hope left!"

"I have spared your traveling carriage, Philip," said a friendly voice.

Sucy turned and saw the young aide-de-camp by the light of the flames.

"Oh, it is all over with us," he answered. "They have eaten my horse. And how am I to make this sleepy general and his wife stir a step?"

"Take a brand, Philip, and threaten them."

"Threaten the Countess? . . ."

"Good-by," cried the aide-de-camp; "I have only just time to get across that unlucky river, and go I must, there is my mother in France! . . . What a night! This herd of wretches would rather lie here in the snow, and most of them would sooner be burned alive than get up. . . . It is four o'clock, Philip! In two hours the Russians will

begin to move, and you will see Beresina covered with corpses a second time, I can tell you. You haven't a horse, and you cannot carry the Countess, so come along with me," he went on, taking his friend by the arm.

"My dear fellow, how am I to leave Stéphanie!"

Major de Sucy grasped the Countess, set her on her feet, and shook her roughly; he was in despair. He compelled her to wake, and she stared at him with dull fixed eyes.

"Stéphanie, we must go, or we shall die here!"

For all answer the Countess tried to sink down again and sleep on the earth. The aide-de-camp snatched a brand from the fire and shook it in her face.

"We must save her in spite of herself," cried Philip, and he carried her in his arms to the carriage. He came back to entreat his friend to help him, and the two young men took the old general and put him beside his wife, without knowing whether he were alive or dead. The major rolled the men over as they crouched on the earth, took away the plundered clothing, and heaped it upon the husband and wife, then he flung some of the broiled fragments of horse-flesh into a corner of the carriage.

"Now, what do you mean to do?" asked the aide-de-camp.

"Drag them along!" answered Sucy.

"You are mad!"

"You are right!" exclaimed Philip, folding his arms on his breast.

Suddenly a desperate plan occurred to him.

"Look you here!" he said, grasping his sentinel by the unwounded arm, "I leave her in your care for one hour. Bear in mind that you must die sooner than let anyone, no matter whom, come near the carriage!"

The Major seized a handful of the lady's diamonds, drew his saber, and violently battered those who seemed to him to be the bravest among the sleepers. By this means he succeeded in rousing the gigantic grenadier and a couple of men whose rank and regiment were undiscoverable.

"It is all up with us!" he cried.

"Of course it is," returned the grenadier; "but that is all one to me."

"Very well then, if die you must, isn't it better to sell your life for a pretty woman, and stand a chance of going back to France again?"

"I would rather go to sleep," said one of the men, dropping down into the snow; "and if you worry me again, Major, I shall stick my toasting-iron into your belly!"

"What is it all about, sir?" asked the grenadier. "The man's drunk. He is a Parisian, and likes to lie in the lap of luxury."

"You shall have these, good fellow," said the Major, holding out a *rivière* of diamonds, "if you will follow me and fight like a madman. The Russians are not ten minutes away; they have horses; we will march up to the nearest battery and carry off two stout ones."

"How about the sentinels, Major?"

"One of us three——" he began; then he turned from the soldier and looked at the aide-de-camp.—"You are coming, aren't you, Hippolyte?"

Hippolyte nodded assent.

"One of us," the Major went on, "will look after the sentry. Besides, perhaps

those blessed Russians are also fast asleep."

"All right, Major; you are a good sort! But will you take me in your carriage?" asked the grenadier.

"Yes, if you don't leave your bones up yonder.—If I come to grief, promise me, you two, that you will do everything in your power to save the Countess."

"All right," said the grenadier.

They set out for the Russian lines, taking the direction of the batteries that had so cruelly raked the mass of miserable creatures huddled together by the river bank. A few minutes later the hoofs of two galloping horses rang on the frozen snow, and the awakened battery fired a volley that passed over the heads of the sleepers; the hoof-beats rattled so fast on the iron ground that they sounded like the hammering in a smithy. The generous aide-de-camp had fallen; the stalwart grenadier had come off safe and sound; and Philip himself had received a bayonet thrust in the shoulder while defending his friend. Notwithstanding his wound, he clung to his horse's mane, and gripped him with his knees so tightly that the animal was held as in a vice.

"God be praised!" cried the Major, when he saw his soldier still on the spot, and the carriage standing where he had left it.

"If you do the right thing by me, sir, you will get me the cross for this. We have treated them to a sword dance to a pretty tune from the rifle, eh?"

"We have done nothing yet! Let us put the horses in. Take hold of these cords."

"They are not long enough."

"All right, grenadier, just go and overhaul those fellows sleeping there; take their shawls, sheets, anything——"

"I say! the rascal is dead," cried the grenadier, as he plundered the first man who came to hand. "Why, they are all dead! how queer!"

"All of them?"

"Yes, every one. It looks as though horseflesh *à la neige* was indigestible."

Philip shuddered at the words. The night had grown twice as cold as before.

"Great Heaven! to lose her when I have saved her life a score of times already."

He shook the Countess. "Stéphanie! Stéphanie!" he cried.

She opened her eyes.

"We are saved, madame!"

"Saved!" she echoed, and fell back again.

The horses were harnessed after a fashion at last. The Major held his saber in his unwounded hand, took the reins in the other, saw to his pistols, and sprang on one of the horses, while the grenadier mounted the other. The old sentinel had been pushed into the carriage, and lay across the knees of the General and the Countess; his feet were frozen. Urged on by blows from the flat of the saber, the horses dragged the carriage at a mad gallop down to the plain, where endless difficulties awaited them. Before long it became almost impossible to advance without crushing sleeping men, women, and even children at every step, all of whom declined to stir when the grenadier awakened them. In vain M. de Sucy looked for the track that the rearguard had cut through this dense crowd of human beings; there was no more sign of their passage than of

the wake of a ship in the sea. The horses could only move at a foot pace, and were stopped most frequently by soldiers, who threatened to kill them.

"Do you mean to get there?" asked the grenadier.

"Yes, if it costs every drop of blood in my body! if it costs the whole world!" the Major answered.

"Forward, then! . . . You can't have the omelette without breaking eggs." And the grenadier of the Garde urged on the horses over the prostrate bodies, and upset the bivouacs; the blood-stained wheels plowing that field of faces left a double furrow of dead. But in justice it should be said that he never ceased to thunder out his warning cry, "Carrion! look out!"

"Poor wretches!" exclaimed the Major.

"Bah! That way, or the cold, or the cannon!" said the grenadier, goading on the horses with the point of his sword.

Then came the catastrophe, which must have happened sooner but for miraculous good fortune; the carriage was overturned, and all further progress was stopped at once.

"I expected as much!" exclaimed the imperturbable grenadier. "Oho! he is dead!" he added, looking at his comrade.

"Poor Laurent!" said the Major.

"Laurent! Wasn't he in the Fifth Chausseurs?"

"Yes."

"My own cousin.—Pshaw! this beastly life is not so pleasant that one need be sorry for him as things go."

But all this time the carriage lay overturned, and the horses were only released after great and irreparable loss of time. The shock had been so violent that the Countess had been awakened by it, and the subsequent commotion roused her from her stupor. She shook off the rugs and rose.

"Where are we, Philip?" she asked in musical tones, as she looked about her.

"About five hundred paces from the bridge. We are just about to cross the Beresina. When we are on the other side, Stéphanie, I will not tease you any more; I will let you go to sleep; we shall be in safety, we can go on to Wilna in peace. God grant that you may never know what your life has cost!"

"You are wounded!"

"A mere trifle."

The hour of doom had come. The Russian cannon announced the day. The Russians were in possession of Studzianka, and thence were raking the plain with grape-shot; and by the first dim light of the dawn the Major saw two columns moving and forming above on the heights. Then a cry of horror went up from the crowd, and in a moment everyone sprang to his feet. Each instinctively felt his danger, and all made a rush for the bridge, surging towards it like a wave.

Then the Russians came down upon them, swift as a conflagration. Men, women, children, and horses all crowded towards the river. Luckily for the Major and the Countess, they were still at some distance from the bank. General Eblé had just set fire to the bridge on the other side; but in spite of all the warnings given to those who rushed towards the chance of salvation, not one among them could or would draw back. The overladen bridge gave way, and not only so, the impetus of the frantic

living wave towards that fatal bank was such that a dense crowd of human beings was thrust into the water as if by an avalanche. The sound of a single human cry could not be distinguished; there was a dull crash as if an enormous stone had fallen into the water—and the Beresina was covered with corpses.

The violent recoil of those in front, striving to escape this death, brought them into hideous collision with those behind them, who were pressing towards the bank, and many were suffocated and crushed. The Comte and Comtesse de Vandières owed their lives to the carriage. The horses that had trampeled and crushed so many dying men were crushed and trampled to death in their turn by the human maelstrom which eddied from the bank. Sheer physical strength saved the Major and the grenadier. They killed others in self-defense. That wild sea of human faces and living bodies, surging to and fro as by one impulse, left the bank of the Beresina clear for a few moments. The multitude had hurled themselves back on the plain. Some few men sprang down from the banks toward the river, not so much with any hope of reaching the opposite shore, which for them meant France, as from dread of the wastes of Siberia. For some bold spirits despair became a panoply. An officer leapt from hummock to hummock of ice, and reached the other shore; one of the soldiers scrambled over miraculously on the piles of dead bodies and drift ice. But the immense multitude left behind saw at last that the Russians would not slaughter twenty thousand unarmed men, too numb with the cold to attempt to resist them, and each awaited his fate with dreadful apathy. By this time the Major and his grenadier, the old General and his wife, were left to themselves not very far from the place where the bridge had been. All four stood dry-eyed and silent among the heaps of dead. A few able-bodied men and one or two officers, who had recovered all their energy at this crisis, gather about them. The group was sufficiently large; there were about fifty men all told. A couple of hundred paces from them stood the wreck of the artillery bridge, which had broken down the day before; the Major saw this, and "Let us make a raft!" he cried.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before the whole group hurried to the ruins of the bridge. A crowd of men began to pick up iron clamps and to hunt for planks and ropes—for all the materials for a raft, in short. A score of armed men and officers, under command of the Major, stood on guard to protect the workers from any desperate attempt on the part of the multitude if they should guess their design. The longing for freedom, which inspires prisoners to accomplish impossibilities, cannot be compared with the hope which lent energy at that moment to these forlorn Frenchmen.

"The Russians are upon us! Here are the Russians!" the guard shouted to the workers.

The timbers creaked, the raft grew larger, stronger, and more substantial. Generals, colonels, and common soldiers all alike bent beneath the weight of wagon wheels, chains, coils of rope, and planks of timber; it was a modern realization of the building of Noah's ark. The young Countess, sitting by her husband's side, looked on, regretful that she

could do nothing to aid the workers, though she helped to knot the lengths of rope together.

At last the raft was finished. Forty men launched it out into the river, while ten of the soldiers held the ropes that must keep it moored to the shore. The moment that they saw their handiwork floating on the Beresina, they sprang down on to it from the bank with callous selfishness. The Major, dreading the frenzy of the first rush, held back Stéphanie and the General; but a shudder ran through him when he saw the landing place black with people, and men crowding down like playgoers into the pit of a theater.

"It was I who thought of the raft, you savages!" he cried. "I have saved your lives, and you will not make room for me!"

A confused murmur was the only answer. The men at the edge took up stout poles, thrust them against the bank with all their might, so as to shove the raft out and gain an impetus at its starting upon a journey across a sea of floating ice and dead bodies towards the other shore.

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!* I will knock some of you off into the water if you don't make room for the Major and his two companions," shouted the grenadier. He raised his saber threateningly, delayed the departure, and made the men stand closer together, in spite of threatening yells.

"I shall fall in! . . . I shall go overboard! . . ." his fellows shouted.

"Let us start! Put off!"

The Major gazed with tearless eyes at the woman he loved; an impulse of sublime resignation raised her eyes to heaven.

"To die with you!" she said.

In the situation of the folk upon the raft there was a certain comic element. They might utter hideous yells, but not one of them dared to oppose the grenadier, for they were packed together so tightly that if one man were knocked down, the whole raft might capsize. At this delicate crisis, a captain tried to rid himself of one of his neighbors; the man saw the hostile intention of his officer, collared him, and pitched him overboard. "Aha! The duck has a mind to drink. . . . Over with you!—There is room for two now!" he shouted. "Quick, Major, throw your little woman over, and come! Never mind that old dotard; he will drop off to-morrow!"

"Be quick!" cried a voice, made up of a hundred voices.

"Come, Major! Those fellows are making a fuss, and well they may!"

The Comte de Vandières flung off his ragged blankets, and stood before them in his general's uniform.

"Let us save the Count," said Philip.

Stéphanie grasped his hand tightly in hers, flung her arms about, and clasped him close in an agonized embrace.

"Farewell," she said.

Then each knew the other's thoughts. The Comte de Vandières recovered his energies and presence of mind sufficiently to jump on to the raft, whither Stéphanie followed him after one last look at Philip.

"Major, won't you take my place? I do not care a straw for life; I have neither wife, nor child, nor mother belonging to me——"

"I give them into your charge," cried the Major, indicating the Count and his wife.

"Be easy; I will take as much care of them as of the apple of my eye."

Philip stood stock-still on the bank. The raft sped so violently towards the opposite shore that it ran aground with a violent shock to all on board. The Count, standing on the very edge, was shaken into the stream; and as he fell, a mass of ice swept by and struck off his head, and sent it flying like a ball.

"Hey! Major!" shouted the grenadier.

"Farewell!" a woman's voice called aloud.

An icy shiver of dread ran through Philip de Sucy, and he dropped down where he stood, overcome with cold and sorrow and weariness.

"My poor niece went out of her mind," the doctor added after a brief pause. "Ah! monsieur," he went on, grasping M. d'Albon's hand, "what a fearful life for the poor little thing, so young, so delicate. An unheard-of misfortune separated her from that grenadier of the Garde (Fleuriot by name), and for two years she was dragged on after the army, the laughing-stock of a rabble of outcasts. She went barefoot, I heard, ill-clad, neglected, and starved for months at a time; sometimes confined in a hospital, sometimes living like a hunted animal. God alone knows all the misery which she endured, and yet she lives. She was shut up in a madhouse in a little German town, while her relations, believing her to be dead, were dividing her property here in France.

"In 1816 the grenadier Fleuriot recognized her in an inn in Strasbourg. She had just managed to escape from captivity. Some peasants told him that the Countess had lived for a whole month in a forest, and how that they had tracked her and tried to catch her without success.

"I was at that time not many leagues from Strasbourg; and hearing the talk about this girl in the wood, I wished to verify the strange facts that had given rise to absurd stories. What was my feeling when I beheld the Countess? Fleuriot told me all that he knew of the piteous story. I took the poor fellow with my niece into Auvergne, and there I had the misfortune to lose him. He had some ascendency over Mme. de Vandières. He alone succeeded in persuading her to wear clothes; and in those days her one word of human speech—*Farewell*—she seldom uttered. Fleuriot set himself to the task of awakening certain associations; but there he failed completely; he drew that one sorrowful word from her a little more frequently, that was all. But the old grenadier could amuse her, and devoted himself to playing with her, and through him I hoped; but——" Here Stéphanie's uncle broke off. After a moment he went on again.

"Here she has found another creature with whom she seems to have an understanding—an idiot peasant girl, who once, in spite of her plainness and imbecility, fell in love with a mason. The mason thought of marrying her because she had a little bit of land, and for a whole year poor Geneviève was the happiest of living creatures. She dressed in her best, and danced on Sundays with Dallot; she understood love; there was

room for love in her heart and brain. But Dallot thought better of it. He found another girl who had all her senses and rather more land than Geneviève, and he forsook Geneviève for her. Then the poor thing lost the little intelligence that love had developed in her; she can do nothing now but cut grass and look after the cattle. My niece and the poor girl are in some sort bound to each other by the invisible chain of their common destiny, and by their madness due to the same cause. Just come here a moment; look!" and Stéphanie's uncle led the Marquis d'Albon to the window.

There, in fact, the magistrate beheld the pretty Countess sitting on the ground at Geneviève's knee, while the peasant girl was wholly absorbed in combing out Stéphanie's long, black hair with a huge comb. The Countess submitted herself to this, uttering low smothered cries that expressed her enjoyment of the sensation of physical comfort. A shudder ran through M. d'Albon as he saw her attitude of languid abandonment, the animal supineness that revealed an utter lack of intelligence.

"Oh! Philip, Philip!" he cried; "past troubles are as nothing. Is it quite hopeless?" he asked.

The doctor raised his eyes to heaven.

"Good-by, monsieur," said M. d'Albon, pressing the old man's hand. "My friend is expecting me; you will see him here before very long."

"Then it is Stéphanie herself?" cried Sucy when the Marquis had spoken the first few words. "Ah! until now I did not feel sure!" he added. Tears filled the dark eyes that were wont to wear a stern expression.

"Yes; she is the Comtesse de Vandières," his friend replied.

The Colonel started up, and hurriedly began to dress.

"Why, Philip!" cried the horrified magistrate. "Are you going mad?"

"I am quite well now," said the Colonel simply. "This news has soothed all my bitterest grief; what pain could hurt me while I think of Stéphanie? I am going over to the Minorite convent, to see her and speak to her, to restore her to health again. She is free; ah, surely, surely, happiness will smile on us, or there is no Providence above. How can you think that she could hear my voice, poor Stéphanie, and not recover her reason?"

"She has seen you once already, and she did not recognize you," the magistrate answered gently, trying to suggest some wholesome fears to this friend, whose hopes were visibly too high.

The Colonel shuddered, but he began to smile again, with a slight involuntary gesture of incredulity. Nobody ventured to oppose his plans, and a few hours later he had taken up his abode in the old priory, to be near the doctor and the Comtesse de Vandières.

"Where is she?" he cried at once.

"Hush!" answered M. Fanjat, Stéphanie's uncle. "She is sleeping. Stay; here she is."

Philip saw the poor distraught sleeper crouching on a stone bench in the sun. Her thick hair, straggling over her face, screened it from the glare and heat; her arms dropped languidly to the earth; she lay at ease as gracefully as a fawn, her feet tucked up beneath her; her

bosom rose and fell with her even breathing; there was the same transparent whiteness as of porcelain in her skin and complexion that we so often admire in children's faces. Geneviève sat there motionless, holding a spray that Stéphanie doubtless had brought down from the top of one of the tallest poplars; the idiot girl was waving the green branch above her, driving away the flies from her sleeping companion, and gently fanning her.

She stared at M. Fanjat and the Colonel as they came up; then, like a dumb animal that recognizes its master, she slowly turned her face towards the Countess, and watched over her as before, showing not the slightest sign of intelligence or of astonishment. The air was scorching. The glittering particles of the stone bench shone like sparks of fire; the meadow sent up the quivering vapors that hover above the grass and gleam like golden dust when they catch the light, but Geneviève did not seem to feel the raging heat.

The Colonel wrung M. Fanjat's hands; the tears that gathered in the soldier's eyes stole down his cheeks, and fell on the grass at Stéphanie's feet.

"Sir," said her uncle, "for these two years my heart has been broken daily. Before very long you will be as I am; if you do not weep, you will not feel your anguish the less."

"You have taken care of her!" said the Colonel, and jealousy no less than gratitude could be read in his eyes.

The two men understood one another. They grasped each other by the hand again, and stood motionless, gazing in admiration at the serenity that slumber had brought into the lovely face before them. Stéphanie heaved a sigh from time to time, and this sigh, that had all the appearance of sensibility, made the unhappy Colonel tremble with gladness.

"Alas!" M. Fanjat said gently, "do not deceive yourself, monsieur; as you see her now, she is in full possession of such reason as she has."

Those who have sat for whole hours absorbed in the delight of watching over the slumber of some tenderly-beloved one, whose waking eyes will smile for them, will doubtless understand the bliss and anguish that shook the Colonel. For him this slumber was an illusion, the waking must be a kind of death, the most dreadful of all deaths.

Suddenly a kid frisked in two or three bounds towards the bench, and snuffed at Stéphanie. The sound awakened her; she sprang lightly to her feet without scaring away the capricious creature; but as soon as she saw Philip she fled, followed by her four-footed playmate to a thicket of elder trees; then she uttered a little cry like the note of a startled wild bird, the same sound that the Colonel had heard once before near the grating, when the Countess appeared to M. d'Albon for the first time. At length she climbed into a laburnum tree, ensconced herself in the feathery greenery, and peered out at the *strange man* with as much interest as the most inquisitive nightingale in the forest.

"Farewell, farewell, farewell," she said, but the soul sent no trace of expression of feeling through the words, spoken with the careless intonation of a bird's notes.

"She does not know me!" the Colonel exclaimed in despair. "Stéphanie! Here

is Philip, your Philip! . . . Philip!" and the poor soldier went towards the laburnum tree; but when he stood three paces away, the Countess eyed him almost defiantly, though there was timidity in her eyes; then at a bound she sprang from the laburnum to an acacia, and thence to a spruce-fir, swinging from bough to bough with marvelous dexterity.

"Do not follow her," said M. Fanjat, addressing the Colonel. "You would arouse a feeling of aversion in her which might become insurmountable; I will help you to make her acquaintance and to tame her. Sit down on the bench. If you pay no heed whatever to her, poor child, it will not be long before you will see her come nearer by degrees to look at you."

"That *she* should not know me! that *she* should fly from me!" the Colonel repeated, sitting down on a rustic bench and leaning his back against a tree that overshadowed it.

He bowed his head. The doctor remained silent. Before very long the Countess stole softly down from her high refuge in the spruce-fir, flitting like a will-of-the-wisp; for as the wind stirred the boughs, she lent herself at times to the swaying movements of the trees. At each branch she stopped and peered at the stranger; but as she saw him sitting motionless, she at length jumped down to the grass, stood a while, and came slowly across the meadow. When she took up her position by a tree about ten paces from the bench, M. Fanjat spoke to the Colonel in a low voice.

"Feel in my pocket for some lumps of sugar," he said, "and let her see them, she will come; I willingly give up to you the pleasure of giving her sweetmeats. She is passionately fond of sugar, and by that means you will accustom her to come to you and to know you."

"She never cared for sweet things when she was a woman," Philip answered sadly.

When he held out the lump of sugar between his thumb and finger, and shook it, Stéphanie uttered the wild note again, and sprang quickly towards him; then she stopped short, there was a conflict between longing for the sweet morsel and instinctive fear of him; she looked at the sugar, turned her head away, and looked again like an unfortunate dog forbidden to touch some scrap of food, while his master slowly recites the greater part of the alphabet until he reaches the letter that gives permission. At length animal appetite conquered fear; Stéphanie rushed to Philip, held out a dainty brown hand to pounce upon the coveted morsel, touched her lover's fingers, snatched the piece of sugar, and vanished with it into a thicket. This painful scene was too much for the Colonel; he burst into tears, and took refuge in the drawing-room.

"Then has love less courage than affection?" M. Fanjat asked him. "I have hope, M. le Baron. My poor niece was once in a far more pitiable state than at present."

"Is it possible?" cried Philip.

"She would not wear clothes," answered the doctor.

The Colonel shuddered, and his face grew pale. To the doctor's mind this pallor was an unhealthy symptom; he went over to him and felt his pulse, M. de Sucy was in a high fever; by

dint of persuasion, he succeeded in putting the patient in bed, and gave him a few drops of laudanum to gain repose and sleep.

The Baron de Sucy spent nearly a week in a constant struggle with a deadly anguish, and before long he had no tears left to shed. He was often well-nigh heart-broken; he could not grow accustomed to the sight of the Countess's madness; but he made terms for himself, as it were, in this cruel position, and sought alleviations in his pain. His heroism was boundless. He found courage to overcome Stéphanie's wild shyness by choosing sweetmeats for her, and devoted all his thoughts to this, bringing these dainties, and following up the little victories that he set himself to gain over Stéphanie's instincts (the last gleam of intelligence in her), until he succeeded to some extent—she grew *tamer* than ever before. Every morning the Colonel went into the park; and if, after a long search for the Countess, he could not discover the tree in which she was rocking herself gently, nor the nook where she lay crouching at play with some bird, nor the roof where she had perched herself, he would whistle the well-known air *Partant pour la Syrie,* which recalled old memories of their love, and Stéphanie would run towards him lightly as a fawn. She saw the Colonel so often that she was no longer afraid of him; before very long she would sit on his knee with her thin, lithe arms about him. And while thus they sat as lovers love to do, Philip doled out sweetmeats one by one to the eager Countess. When they were all finished, the fancy often took Stéphanie to search through her lover's pockets with a monkey's quick instinctive dexterity, till she had assured herself that there was nothing left, and then she gazed at Philip with vacant eyes; there was no thought, no gratitude in their clear depths. Then she would play with him. She tried to take off his boots to see his foot; she tore his gloves to shreds, and put on his hat; and she would let him pass his hands through her hair, and take her in his arms, and submit passively to his passionate kisses, and at last, if he shed tears, she would gaze silently at him.

She quite understood the signal when he whistled *Partant pour la Syrie,* but he could never succeed in inducing her to pronounce her own name—*Stéphanie.* Philip persevered in his heartrending task, sustained by a hope that never left him. If on some bright autumn morning he saw her sitting quietly on a bench under a poplar tree, grown brown now as the season wore, the unhappy lover would lie at her feet and gaze into her eyes as long as she would let him gaze, hoping that some spark of intelligence might gleam from them. At times he lent himself to an illusion; he would imagine that he saw the hard, changeless light in them falter, that there was a new life and softness in them, and he would cry, "Stéphanie! oh, Stéphanie! you hear me, you see me, do you not?"

But for her the sound of his voice was like any other sound, the stirring of the wind in the trees, or the lowing of the cow on which she scrambled; and the Colonel wrung his hands in a despair that lost none of its bitterness; nay, time and these vain efforts only added to his anguish.

One evening, under the quiet sky, in the midst of the silence and peace of the forest hermitage, M. Fanjat saw from a distance that the Baron was busy loading a pistol, and knew that the lover had given up all hope. The blood surged to the old doctor's heart; and if he overcame the dizzy sensation that seized on him, it was because he would rather see his niece live with a disordered brain than lose her forever. He hurried to the place.

"What are you doing?" he cried.

"That is for me," the Colonel answered, pointing to a loaded pistol on the bench, "and this for her!" he added, as he rammed down the wad into the pistol that he held in his hands.

The Countess lay stretched out on the ground, playing with the balls.

"Then you do not know that last night, as she slept, she murmured 'Philip'?" said the doctor quietly, dissembling his alarm.

"She called my name?" cried the Baron, letting his weapon fall. Stéphanie picked it up, but he snatched it out of her hands, caught the other pistol from the bench, and fled.

"Poor little one!" exclaimed the doctor, rejoicing that his stratagem had succeeded so well. He held her tightly to his heart as he went on. "He would have killed you, selfish that he is! He wants you to die because he is unhappy. He cannot learn to love you for your own sake, little one! We forgive him, do we not? He is senseless; you are only mad. Never mind; God alone shall take you to Himself. We look upon you as unhappy because you no longer share our miseries, fools that we are! . . . Why, she is happy," he said, taking her on his knee; "nothing troubles her; she lives like the birds, like the deer——"

Stéphanie sprang upon a young blackbird that was hopping about, caught it with a little shriek of glee, twisted its neck, looked at the dead bird, and dropped it at the foot of a tree without giving it another thought.

The next morning at daybreak the Colonel went out into the garden to look for Stéphanie; hope was very strong in him. He did not see her, and whistled; and when she came, he took her arm, and for the first time they walked together along an alley beneath the trees, while the fresh morning wind shook down the dead leaves about them. The Colonel sat down, and Stéphanie, of her own accord, lit upon his knee. Philip trembled with gladness.

"Love!" he cried, covering her hands with passionate kisses, "I am Philip . . ."

She looked curiously at him.

"Come close," he added, as he held her tightly. "Do you feel the beating of my heart? It has beat for you, for you only. I love you always. Philip is not dead. He is here. You are sitting on his knee. You are my Stéphanie, I am your Philip!"

"Farewell!" she said, "farewell!"

The Colonel shivered. He thought that some vibration of his highly wrought feeling had surely reached his beloved; that the heartrending cry, drawn from him by hope, the utmost effort of a love that must last forever, of passion in its ecstasy, striving to reach the soul of the woman he loved, must awaken her.

"Oh, Stéphanie! we shall be happy yet!"

A cry of satisfaction broke from her, a dim light of intelligence gleamed in her eyes.

"She knows me! . . . Stéphanie! . . ."

The Colonel felt his heart swell, and tears gathered under his eyelids. But all at once the Countess held up a bit of sugar for him to see; she had discovered it by searching diligently for it while he spoke. What he had mistaken for a human thought was a degree of reason required for a monkey's mischievous trick!

Philip fainted. M. Fanjat found the Countess sitting on his prostrate body. She was nibbling her bit of sugar, giving expression to her enjoyment by little grimaces and gestures that would have been thought clever in a woman in full possession of her senses if she tried to mimic her paroquet or her cat.

"Oh, my friend!" cried Philip, when he came to himself. "This is like death every moment of the day! I love her too much! I could bear anything if only through her madness she had kept some little trace of womanhood. But, day after day, to see her like a wild animal, not even a sense of modesty left, to see her——"

"So you must have a theatrical madness, must you?" said the doctor sharply, "and your prejudices are stronger than your lover's devotion? What, monsieur! I resign to you the sad pleasure of giving my niece her food, and the enjoyment of her playtime; I have kept for myself nothing but the most burdensome cares. I watch over her while you are asleep, I—— Go, monsieur, and give up the task. Leave this dreary hermitage; I can live with my little darling; I understand her disease; I study her movements; I know her secrets. Some day you shall thank me."

The Colonel left the Minorite convent, that he was destined to see only once again. The doctor was alarmed by the effect that his words made upon his guest; his niece's lover became as dear to him as his niece. If either of them deserved to be pitied, that one was certainly Philip; did he not bear alone the burden of an appalling sorrow?

The doctor made inquiries, and learned that the hapless Colonel had retired to a country house of his near Saint-Germain. A dream had suggested to him a plan for restoring the Countess to reason, and the doctor did not know that he was spending the rest of the autumn in carrying out a vast scheme. A small stream ran through his park, and in winter time flooded a low-lying land, something like the plain on the eastern side of the Beresina. The village of Satout, on the slope of a ridge above it, bounded the horizon of a picture of desolation, something as Studzianka lay on the heights that shut in the swamp of the Beresina. The Colonel set laborers to work to make a channel to resemble the greedy river that had swallowed up the treasures of France and Napoleon's army. By the help of his memories, Philip reconstructed on his own lands the bank where General Eblé had built his bridges. He drove in piles, and then set fire to them, so as to reproduce the charred and blackened balks of timber that on either side of the river told the stragglers that their retreat to France had been cut off. He had materials collected like the fragments out of which his comrades in misfortune had made the raft; his park was laid waste

to complete the illusion on which his last hopes were founded. He ordered ragged uniforms and clothing for several hundred peasants. Huts and bivouacs and batteries were raised and burned down. In short, he omitted no device that could reproduce that most hideous of all scenes. He succeeded. When, in the earliest days of December, snow covered the earth with a thick white mantle, it seemed to him that he saw the Beresina itself. The mimic Russia was so startlingly real, that several of his old comrades recognized the scene of their past sufferings. M. de Sucy kept the secret of the drama to be enacted with this tragical background, but it was looked upon as a mad freak in several circles of society in Paris.

In the early days of the month of January 1820, the Colonel drove over to the Forest of l'Isle-Adam in a carriage like the one in which M. and Mme. de Vandières had driven from Moscow to Studzianka. The horses closely resembled that other pair that he had risked his life to bring from the Russian lines. He himself wore the grotesque and soiled clothes, accouterments, and cap that he had worn on the 29th of November 1812. He had even allowed his hair and beard to grow, and neglected his appearance, that no detail might be lacking to recall the scene in all its horror.

"I guessed what you meant to do," cried M. Fanjat, when he saw the Colonel dismount. "If you mean your plan to succeed, do not let her see you in that carriage. This evening I will give my niece a little laudanum, and while she sleeps, we will dress her in such clothes as she wore at Studzianka, and put her in your traveling carriage. I will follow you in a berline."

Soon after two o'clock in the morning, the young Countess was lifted into the carriage, laid on the cushions, and wrapped in a coarse blanket. A few peasants held torches while this strange elopement was arranged.

A sudden cry rang through the silence of night, and Philip and the doctor, turning, saw Geneviève. She had come out half-dressed from the low room where she slept.

"Farewell, farewell; it is all over, farewell!" she called, crying bitterly.

"Why, Geneviève, what is it?" asked M. Fanjat.

Geneviève shook her head despairingly, raised her arm to heaven, looked at the carriage, uttered a long snarling sound, and with evident signs of profound terror, slunk in again.

"'Tis a good omen," cried the Colonel. "The girl is sorry to lose her companion. Very likely she *sees* that Stéphanie is about to recover her reason."

"God grant it may be so!" answered M. Fanjat, who seemed to be affected by this incident. Since insanity had interested him, he had known several cases in which a spirit of prophecy and the gift of second sight had been accorded to a disordered brain—two faculties which many travelers tell us are also found among savage tribes.

So it happened that, as the Colonel had foreseen and arranged, Stéphanie traveled across the mimic Beresina about nine o'clock in the morning, and was awakened by an explosion of rockets about a hundred paces from the scene of action. It was a signal. Hundreds of peasants raised a terrible clamor, like

the despairing shouts that startled the Russians when twenty thousand stragglers learned that by their own fault they were delivered over to death or to slavery.

When the Countess heard the report and the cries that followed, she sprang out of the carriage, and rushed in frenzied anguish over the snow-covered plain; she saw the burned bivouacs and the fatal raft about to be launched on a frozen Beresina. She saw Major Philip brandishing his saber among the crowd. The cry that broke from Mme. de Vandières made the blood run cold in the veins of all who heard it. She stood face to face with the Colonel, who watched her with a beating heart. At first she stared blankly at the strange scene about her, then she reflected. For an instant, brief as a lightning flash, there was the same quick gaze and total lack of comprehension that we see in the bright eyes of a bird; then she passed her hand across her forehead with the intelligent expression of a thinking being; she looked round on the memories that had taken substantial form, into the past life that had been transported into her present; she turned her face to Philip—and saw him! An awed silence fell upon the crowd. The Colonel breathed hard, but dared not speak; tears filled the doctor's eyes. A faint color overspread Stéphanie's beautiful face, deepening slowly, till at last she glowed like a girl radiant with youth. Still the bright flush grew. Life and joy, kindled within her at the blaze of intelligence, swept through her like leaping flames. A convulsive tremor ran from her feet to her heart. But all these tokens, which flashed on the sight in a moment, gathered and gained consistence, as it were, when Stéphanie's eyes gleamed with heavenly radiance, the light of a soul within. She lived, she thought! She shuddered—was it with fear? God Himself unloosed a second time the tongue that had been bound by death, and set His fire anew in the extinguished soul. The electric torrent of the human will vivified the body whence it had so long been absent.

"Stéphanie!" the Colonel cried.

"Oh! it is Philip!" said the poor Countess.

She fled to the trembling arms held out towards her, and the embrace of the two lovers frightened those who beheld it. Stéphanie burst into tears.

Suddenly the tears ceased to flow; she lay in his arms a dead weight, as if stricken by a thunderbolt, and said faintly—

"Farewell, Philip! . . . I love you . . . farewell!"

"She is dead!" cried the Colonel, unclasping his arms.

The old doctor received the lifeless body of his niece in his arms as a young man might have done; he carried her to a stack of wood and set her down. He looked at her face, and laid a feeble hand, tremulous with agitation, upon her heart—it beat no longer.

"Can it really be so?" he said, looking from the Colonel, who stood motionless, to Stéphanie's face. Death had invested it with a radiant beauty, a transient aureole, the pledge, it may be, of a glorious life to come.

"Yes, she is dead."

"Oh, but that smile!" cried Philip; "only see that smile. Is it possible?"

"She has grown cold already," answered M. Fanjat.

M. de Sucy made a few strides to tear himself from the sight; then he stopped, and whistled the air that the mad Stéphanie had understood; and when he saw that she did not rise and hasten to him, he walked away, staggering like a drunken man, still whistling, but he did not turn again.

In society General de Sucy is looked upon as very agreeable, and above all things, as very lively and amusing. Not very long ago a lady complimented him upon his good humor and equable temper.

"Ah! madame," he answered, "I pay very dearly for my merriment in the evening if I am alone."

"Then, you are never alone, I suppose."

"No," he answered, smiling.

If a keen observer of human nature could have seen the look that Sucy's face wore at that moment, he would, without doubt, have shuddered.

"Why do you not marry?" the lady asked (she had several daughters of her own at a boarding-school). "You are wealthy; you belong to an old and noble house; you are clever; you have a future before you; everything smiles upon you."

"Yes," he answered; "one smile is killing me——"

On the morrow the lady heard with amazement that M. de Sucy had shot himself through the head that night.

The fashionable world discussed the extraordinary news in divers ways, and each had a theory to account for it; play, love, ambition, irregularities in private life, according to the taste of the speaker, explained the last act of the tragedy begun in 1812. Two men alone, a magistrate and an old doctor, knew that M. le Comte de Sucy was one of those souls unhappy in the strength God gives to them to enable them to triumph daily in a ghastly struggle with a mysterious horror. If for a moment God withdraws His sustaining hand, they succumb.

Gaudissart the Great

To Mme. la Duchesse de Castries

Is NOT the commercial traveler—a being unknown in earlier times—one of the most curious types produced by the manners and customs of this age? And is it not his peculiar function to carry out in a certain class of things the immense transition which connects the age of material development with that of intellectual development? Our epoch will be the link between the age of isolated forces rich in original creativeness, and that of the uniform but leveling force which gives monotony to its products, casting them in masses, and following out an unifying idea—the ultimate expression of social communities. After the Saturnalia of intellectual communism, after the last struggles of many civilizations concentrating all the treasures of the world on a single spot, must

not the darkness of barbarism invariably supervene?

The commercial traveler is to ideas what coaches are to men and things. He carts them about, he sets them moving, brings them into impact. He loads himself at the center of enlightenment with a supply of beams which he scatters among torpid communities. This human *pyrophoros* is an ignorant instructor, mystified and mystifying, a disbelieving priest who talks all the more glibly of arcana and dogmas. A strange figure! The man has seen everything, he knows everything, he is acquainted with everybody. Saturated in Parisian vice, he can assume the rusticity of the countryman. Is he not the link that joins the village to the capital, though himself not essentially either Parisian or provincial?

For he is a wanderer. He never sees to the bottom of things; he learns only the names of men and places, only the surface of things; he has his own foot-rule, and measures everything by that standard; his glance glides over all he sees, and never penetrates the depths. He is inquisitive about everything, and really cares for nothing. A scoffer, always ready with a political song, and apparently equally attached to all parties, he is generally patriotic at heart. A good actor, he can assume by turns the smile of liking, satisfaction, and obligingness, or cast it off and appear in his true character, in the normal frame which is his state of rest.

He is bound to be an observer or to renounce his calling. Is he not constantly compelled to sound a man at a glance, and guess his mode of action, his character, and, above all, his solvency; and, in order to save time, to calculate swiftly the chances of profit? This habit of deciding promptly in matters of business makes him essentially dogmatic; he settles questions out of hand, and talks as a master, of the Paris theaters and actors, and of those in the provinces. Besides, he knows all the good and all the bad places in the kingdom, *de actu et visu*. He would steer you with equal confidence to the abode of virtue or of vice. Gifted as he is with the eloquence of a hot-water tap turned on at will, he can with equal readiness stop short or begin again, without a mistake, his stream of ready-made phrases, flowing without pause, and producing on the victim the effect of a moral douche. He is full of pertinent anecdotes, he smokes, he drinks. He wears a chain with seals and trinkets, he impresses the "small fry," is looked at as a *milord* in the villages, never allows himself to be "got over"—a word of his slang—and knows exactly when to slap his pocket and make the money jingle so as not to be taken for a "sneak" by the woman-servants—a suspicious race—of the houses he calls at.

As to his energy, is it not the least of the characteristics of this human machine? Not the kite pouncing on its prey, not the stag inventing fresh doublings to escape the hounds and put the hunter off the trail, not the dogs coursing the game, can compare with the swiftness of his rush when he scents a commission, the neatness with which he trips up a rival to gain upon him, the keenness with which he feels, sniffs, and spies out an opportunity for "doing business." How many special talents must such a man possess? And how

many will you find in any country of these diplomats of the lower class, profound negotiators, representatives of the calico, jewelry, cloth, or wine trades, and often with more acumen than ambassadors; who are indeed for the most part but superficial?

Nobody in France suspects the immense power constantly wielded by the commercial traveler, the bold pioneer of the transactions which embody to the humblest hamlet the genius of civilization and Parisian inventiveness in its struggle against the common-sense, the ignorance, or the habits of rustic life. We must not overlook these ingenious laborers, by whom the intelligence of the masses is kneaded, molding the most refractory material by sheer talk, and resembling in this the preserving polishers whose file licks the hardest porphyry smooth. Do you want to know the power of the tongue, and the coercive force of mere phrases on the most tenacious coin known—that of the country freeholder in his rustic lair?—Then listen to what some high dignitary of Paris industry can tell you, for whose benefit these clever pistons of the steam engine called Speculation work, and strike, and squeeze.

"Monsieur," said the director-cashier-manager-secretary-and chairman of a famous Fire Insurance Company to an experienced economist, "in the country, out of five hundred thousand francs to be collected in renewing insurances, not more than fifty thousand are paid willingly. The other four hundred and fifty thousand are only extracted by the persistency of our agents, who go to dun the customers who are in arrears till they have renewed their policies, and frighten and excite them by fearful tales of fires.—Eloquence, the gift of the gab, is in fact, nine-tenths of the matter in the ways and means of working our business."

To talk—to make oneself heard—is not this seduction? A nation with two Chambers, a woman with two ears alike are lost! Eve and the Serpent are the perennial myth of a daily recurring fact which began, and will probably only end with a world.

"After two hours' talk you ought to have won a man over to your side," said an attorney who had retired from business.

Walk round the commercial traveler! Study the man. Note his olive-green overcoat, his cloak, his morocco stock, his pipe, his blue-striped cotton shirt. In that figure, so genuinely original that it can stand friction, how many different natures you may discover. See! What an athlete, what a circus, and what a weapon! He—the world—and his tongue.

A daring seaman, he embarks with a stock of mere words to go and fish for money, five or six hundred thousand francs, say, in the frozen ocean, the land of savages, of Iroquois—in France! The task before him is to exact by a purely mental process and painless operation the gold that lies buried in rural hiding-places. The provincial fish will not stand the harpoon or the torch; it is only to be caught in the seine or the landing-net—the gentlest snare.

Can you ever think again without a shudder of the deluge of phrases which begins anew every day at dawn in France?—You know the genus; now for the individual.

There dwells in Paris a matchless bagman, the paragon of his kind, a man possessing in the highest degree every condition indispensable to success in his profession. In his words vitriol mingles with bird-lime: bird-lime to catch the victim, besmear it and stick it to the trapper, vitriol to dissolve the hardest limestone.

His "lime" was hats—he *traveled in hats;* but his gifts, and the skill with which he ensnared folks, had earned him such commercial celebrity that dealers in *l'Article Paris,* the dainty novelties invented in Paris workshops, positively courted him to undertake their business. Thus, when he was in Paris on his return from some triumphant progress, he was perpetually being feasted; in the provinces the agents made much of him; in Paris the largest houses were respectful to him. Welcomed, entertained, and fed wherever he went, to him a breakfast or a dinner in solitude was a pleasure and a debauch. He led the life of a sovereign—nay, better, of a journalist. And was he not the living organ of Paris trade?

His name was Gaudissart; and his fame, his influence, and the praises poured on him had gained him the epithet of Gaudissart the Great. Wherever he made his appearance, whether in a counting-house or an inn, in a drawing-room or a diligence, in a garret or a bank, each one would exclaim on seeing him, "Ah, ha! here is Gaudissart the Great!"

Never was a nickname better suited to the appearance, the manners, the countenance, the voice, or the language of a man. Everything smiled on the Traveler, and he smiled on all. *Similia Similibus;* he was for homeopathy: Puns, a horse-laugh, the complexion of a jolly frair, a Rabelaisian aspect; dress, mien, character, and face combined to give his whole person a stamp of jollification and ribaldry.

Blunt in business, good-natured and capital fun, you would have known him at once for a favorite of the grisette—a man who can climb with a grace to the top of a coach, offer a hand to a lady in difficulties over getting out, jest with the postilion about his bandanna, and sell him a hat; smile at the inn-maid, taking her by the waist—or by the fancy; who at table will imitate the gurgle of a bottle by tapping his cheek while putting his tongue in it, knows to make beer go off by drawing the air between his lips, or can hit a champagne glass a sharp blow with a knife without breaking it, saying to the others, "Can you do that?"—who chaffs shy travelers, contradicts well-informed men, is supreme at table, and secures all the best bits.

A clever man too, he could on occasion put aside all such pleasantries, and look very serious when, throwing away the end of his cigar, he would look out on a town and say, "I mean to see what the folks here are made of." Then Gaudissart was the most cunning and shrewd of ambassadors. He knew how to be the official with the préfet, the capitalist with the banker, orthodox and monarchical with the Royalist, the blunt citizen with the citizen—in short, all things to all men, just what he ought to be wherever he went, leaving Gaudissart outside the door, and finding him again as he went out.

Until 1830 Gaudissart the Great remained faithful to the *Article Paris*. This line of business, in all its branches, appealing to the greater number of human fancies, had enabled him to study the secrets of the heart, had taught him the uses of his persuasive eloquence, the way to open the most closely tied money bags, to incite the fancy of wives and husbands, of children and servants, and to persuade them to gratify it. None so well as he knew how to lure a dealer by the temptations of a job, and to turn away at the moment when his desire for the bait was at a climax. He acknowledged his indebtedness to the hatter's trade, saying that it was by studying the outside of the head that he had learned to understand its inside, that he was accustomed to find caps to fit folks, to throw himself at their head, and so forth. His jests on hats were inexhaustible.

Nevertheless after the August and October of 1830, he gave up traveling in hats and the *Article Paris,* and left off trading in all things mechanical and visible to soar in the loftier spheres of Parisian enterprise. He had given up matter for mind as he himself said, and manufactured products for the infinitely more subtle outcome of the intellect.

This needs explanation.

The stir and upset of 1830 gave rise, as everybody knows, to the new birth of various antiquated ideas which skillful speculators strove to rejuvenate. After 1830 ideas were more than ever a marketable commodity; and, as was once said by a writer who is clever enough to publish nothing, more ideas than pocket-handkerchiefs are filched nowadays. Some day, perhaps, there may be an Exchange for ideas; but even now, good or bad, ideas have their price, are regarded as a crop imported, transferred, and sold, can be realized, and are viewed as an investment. When there are no ideas in the market, speculators try to bring words into fashion, to give them the consistency of an idea, and live on those words as birds live on millet.

Nay, do not laugh! A word is as good as an idea in a country where the ticket on the bale is thought more of than the contents. Have we not seen the book trade thriving on the word *picturesque* when literature had sealed the doom of the word *fantastic?*

Consequently, the excise has levied a tax on the intellect; it has exactly measured the acreage of advertisements, has assessed the prospectus, and weighed thought—Rue de la Paix *Hôtel du Timbre* (the Stamp Office). On being constituted taxable goods, the intellect and its products were bound to obey the method used in manufacturing undertakings. Thus the ideas conceived after drinking in the brain of some of those apparently idle Parisians who do battle on intellectual ground while emptying a bottle or carving a pheasant's thigh, were handed over the day after their mental birth to commercial travelers, whose business it was to set forth, with due skill, *urbi et orbi,* the fried bacon of advertisement and prospectus by which the departmental mouse is tempted into the editor's trap, and becomes known in the vulgar tongue as a subscriber, or a shareholder, a corresponding member, or, perhaps, a backer or a part owner—and being always a flat.

"What a flat I am!" has more than one poor investor exclaimed after being tempted by the prospects of *founding* something, which has finally proved to be the founding that melts down some thousand or twelve hundred francs.

"Subscribers are the fools who cannot understand that it costs more to forge ahead in the realm of intellect than to travel all over Europe," is the speculator's view.

So there is a constant struggle going on between the dilatory public which declines to pay the Paris taxes and the collectors who, living on their percentages, baste that public with new ideas, lard it with undertakings, roast it with prospectuses, spit it on flattery, and at least eat it up with some new sauce in which it gets caught and intoxicated like a fly in treacle. What has not been done in France since 1830 to stimulate the zeal, the conceit of the *intelligent* and *progressive* masses? Titles, medals, diplomas, a sort of Legion of Honor invented for the vulgar martyrs, have crowded on each other's heels. And then every manufacturer of intellectual commodities has discovered a spice, a special condiment, his particular makeweight. Hence the promises of premiums and of anticipated dividends; hence the advertisements of celebrated names without the knowledge of the hapless artists who own them, and thus find themselves implicated unawares in more undertakings than there are days in the year; for the Law could not foresee this theft of names. Hence, too, this rape of ideas which the contractors for public intelligence—like the slave merchants of the East—snatch from the paternal brain at a tender age, and strip and parade before the Greenhorn, their bewildered Sultan the terrible public, who, if not amused, beheads them by stopping their rations of gold.

This mania of the day reacted on Gaudissart the Great, and this was how. A company got up to effect insurances on life and property heard of his irresistible eloquence, and offered him extraordinarily handsome terms, which he accepted. The bargain concluded, the compact signed, the bagman was weaned of the past under the eye of the Secretary to the Society, who freed Gaudissart's mind of its swaddling-clothes, explained the dark corners of the business, taught him its lingo, showed him all the mechanism bit by bit, anatomized the particular class of the public on whom he was to work, stuffed him with cant phrases, crammed him with repartees, stocked him with peremptory arguments, and, so to speak, put an edge on the tongue that was to operate on life in France. The puppet responded admirably to the care lavished on him by Monsieur the Secretary.

The directors of the Insurance Company were so loud in their praises of Gaudissart the Great, showed him so much attention, put the talents of this living prospectus in so favorable a light in the higher circles of banking and of intellectual diplomacy, that the financial managers of two newspapers, then living but since dead, thought of employing him to tout for subscriptions. The *Globe,* the organ of the doctrines of Saint-Simon, and the *Mouvement,* a Republican paper, invited Gaudissart the Great to their private offices and promised him, each, ten francs a head on every subscriber if he secured a thou-

sand, but only five francs a head if he could catch no more than five hundred. As the *line* of the political paper did not interfere with that of the Insurance Company, the bargain was concluded. At the same time, Gaudissart demanded an indemnity of five hundred francs for the week he must spend in "getting up" the doctrine of Saint-Simon, pointing out what efforts of memory and brain would be necessary to enable him to become thoroughly conversant with the *article*, and to talk of it so coherently as to avoid, said he, "putting his foot in it."

He made no claim on the Republicans. In the first place, he himself had a leaning to Republican notions—the only views according to the Gaudissart philosophy that could bring rational equality; and then Gaudissart had ere now dabbled in the plots of the French *carbonari*. He had even been arrested, but released for lack of evidence; and finally, he pointed out to the bankers of the paper that since July he had allowed his mustache to grow, and that he now only needed a particular shape of cap and long spurs to be representative of the Republic.

So for a week he went every morning to be Saint-Simonized at the *Globe* office, and every evening he haunted the bureau of the Insurance Company to learn the elegancies of financial slang. His aptitude and memory were so good that he was ready to start by the 15th of April, the date at which he usually set out on his first annual circuit.

Two large commercial houses, alarmed at the downward tendency of trade, tempted the ambitious Gaudissart still to undertake their agency, and the King of Commercial Travelers showed his clemency in consideration of old friendship and of the enormous percentage he was to take.

"Listen to me, my little Jenny," said he, riding in a hackney cab with a pretty little flower-maker.

Every truly great man loves to be tyrannized over by some feeble creature, and Jenny was Gaudissart's tyrant; he was seeing her home at eleven o'clock from the Gymnase theater, where he had taken her in full dress to a private box on the first tier.

"When I come back, Jenny, I will furnish your room quite elegantly. That gawky Mathilde, who makes you sick with her innuendoes, her real Indian shawls brought by the Russian Ambassador's messengers, her silver-gilt, and her Russian Prince—who is, it strikes me, a rank humbug—even she shall not find a fault in it. I will devote all the 'Children' I can get in the provinces to the decoration of your room."

"Well, that is a nice story, I must say," cried the florist. "What, you monster of a man, you talk to me so coolly of your children! Do you suppose I will put up with anything of that kind?"

"Pshaw! Jenny, are you out of your wits? It is a way of talking in my line of business."

"A pretty line of business indeed!"

"Well, but listen; if you go on talking so much, you will find yourself in the right."

"I choose always to be in the right! I may say you are a cool hand to-night."

"You will not let me say what I have to say? I have to push a most capital idea, a magazine that is to be brought out for children. In our walk of life

a traveler, when he has worked up a town and got, let us say, ten subscriptions to the *Children's Magazine,* says I have got ten *Children;* just as, if I had ten subscriptions to the *Mouvement,* I should simply say I have got ten *Mouvements.*—Now do you understand?"

"A pretty thing too!—So you are meddling in politics? I can see you already in Sainte-Pélagie, and shall have to trot there to see you every day. Oh, when we love a man, my word! If we knew what we are in for, we should leave you to manage for yourselves, you men!—Well, well, you are going to-morrow, don't let us get the black dog on our shoulders; it is too silly."

The cab drew up before a pretty house, newly built in the Rue d'Artois, where Gaudissart and Jenny went up to the fourth floor. Here resided Mlle. Jenny Courand, who was commonly supposed to have been privately married to Gaudissart, a report which the traveler did not deny. To maintain her power over him, Jenny Courand compelled him to pay her a thousand little attentions, always threatening to abandon him to his fate if he failed in the least of them. Gaudissart was to write to her from each town he stopped at and give an account of every action.

"And how many *Children* will you want to furnish my room?" said she, throwing off her shawl and sitting down by a good fire.

"I get five sous on each subscription."

"A pretty joke! Do you expect to make me a rich woman—five sous at a time? Unless you are a wandering Jew and have your pocket sewn up tight."

"But, Jenny, I shall get thousands of *Children.* Just think, the little ones have never had a paper of their own. However, I am a great simpleton to try to explain the economy of business to you—you understand nothing about such matters."

"And pray, then, Gaudissart, if I am such a gaby, why do you love me?"

"Because you are such a sublime gaby! Listen, Jenny. You see, if I can get people to take the *Globe* and the *Mouvement,* and to pay their insurances, instead of earning a miserable eight or ten thousand francs a year by trundling around like a man in a show, I may make twenty to thirty thousand francs out of one round."

"Unlace my stays, Gaudissart, and pull straight—don't drag me askew."

"And then," said the commercial traveler, as he admired the girl's satin shoulders, "I shall be a shareholder in the papers, like Finot, a friend of mine, the son of a hatter, who has thirty thousand francs a year, and will get himself made a peer! And when you think of little Popinot!—By the way, I forgot to tell you that M. Popinot was yesterday made Minister of Commerce. Why should not I too be ambitious? Ah, ha! I could easily catch the cant of the Tribune, and I might be made a Minister—something like a Minister too! Just listen—

"'Gentlemen,' and he took his stand behind an armchair, 'the Press is not a mere tool, not a mere trade. From the point of view of the politician, the Press is an Institution. Now we are absolutely required here to take the political view of things, hence'—he paused for breath—'hence we are bound to inquire whether it is useful or mischievous,

whether it should be encouraged or repressed, whether it should be taxed or free—serious questions all. I believe I shall not be wasting the precious moments of this Chamber by investigating this article and showing you the conditions of the case. We are walking on to a precipice. The Laws indeed are not so guarded as they should be——'

"How is that?" said he, looking at Jenny. "Every orator says that France is marching towards a precipice; they either say that or they talk of the Chariot of the State and political tempests and clouds on the horizon. Don't I know every shade of color! I know the dodges of every trade.—And do you know why? I was born with a caul on. My grandmother kept the caul, and I will give it to you. So, you see, I shall soon be in power!"

"You!"

"Why shouldn't I be Baron Gaudissart and Peer of France? Has not M. Popinot been twice returned deputy for the fourth arrondissement?—And he dines with Louis-Philippe. Finot is to be a Councilor of State, they say. Oh! if only they would send me to London as Ambassador, I am the man to nonplus the English, I can tell you. Nobody has ever caught Gaudissart napping—Gaudissart the Great. No, no one has ever got the better of me, and no one ever shall in any line, politics or impolitics, here or anywhere. But for the present I must give my mind to insuring property, to the *Globe,* to the *Mouvement,* to the *Children's* paper, and to the *Article de Paris.*"

"You will be caught over your newspapers. I will lay a wager that you will not get as far as Poitiers without being done."

"I am ready to bet, my jewel."

"A shawl!"

"Done. If I lose the shawl, I will go back to trade and hats. But, get the better of Gaudissart? Never! never!"

And the illustrious commercial traveler struck an attitude in front of Jenny, looking at her haughtily, one hand in his waistcoat, and his head half-turned in a Napoleonic pose.

"How absurd you are! What have you been eating this evening?"

Gaudissart was a man of eight-and-thirty, of middle height, burly and fat, as a man is who is accustomed to go about in mail-coaches; his face was as round as a pumpkin, florid and with regular features resembling the traditional type adopted by sculptors in every country for their statues of Abundance of Law, Force, Commerce, and the like. His prominent stomach was pear-shaped, and his legs were thin, but he was wiry and active. He picked up Jenny, who was half-undressed, and carried her to her bed.

"Hold your tongue, *free woman,*" said he. "Ah, you don't know anything about the free woman and Saint-Simonism, and antagonism, and Fourierism, and criticism, and determined push—well, it is—in short, it is ten francs on every subscription, Mme. Gaudissart."

"On my honor, you are going crazy, Gaudissart."

"Always more and more crazy about you," said he, tossing his hat on to the sofa.

Next day, after breakfasting in style with Jenny Courand, Gaudissart set out

on horseback to call in all the market towns which he had been particularly instructed to work up by the various companies to whose success he was devoting his genius. After spending forty-five days in beating the country lying between Paris and Blois, he stayed for a fortnight in this little city, devoting the time to writing letters and visiting the neighboring towns. The day before leaving for Tours he wrote to Mlle. Jenny Courand the following letter, of which the fullness and charm cannot be matched by any narrative, and which also serves to prove the peculiar legitimacy of the ties that bound these two persons together.

Letter from Gaudissart to Jenny Courand

"My dear Jenny:

"I am afraid you will lose your bet. Like Napoleon, Gaudissart has his star, and will know no Waterloo. I have triumphed everywhere under the conditions set forth. The Insurance business is doing very well. Between Paris and Blois I secured near on two millions; but towards the middle of France heads are remarkably hard, and millions infinitely scarcer. The *Article Paris* toddles on nicely, as usual; it is a ring on your finger. With my usual rattle, I can always come round the shopkeepers. I got rid of sixty-two Ternaux shawls at Orleans; but, on my honor, I don't know what they will do with them unless they put them back on the sheep.

"As to the newspaper line, the deuce is in it! that is quite another pair of shoes. God above us! what a deal of piping those good people take before they have learned a new tune. I have got no more than sixty-two *Mouvements* so far; and that in my whole journey is less than the Ternaux shawls in one town. These rascally Republicans won't subscribe at all; you talk to them, and they talk; they are quite of your way of thinking, and you soon are all agreed to upset everything that exists. Do you think the man will fork out? Not a bit of it. And if he has three square inches of ground, enough to grow a dozen cabbages, or wood enough to cut a toothpick, your man will talk of the settlement of landed estate, of taxation, and crops, and compensation—a pack of nonsense, while I waste my time and spittle in patriotism. Business is bad, and the *Mouvement* generally is dull. I am writing to the owners to say so. And I am very sorry as a matter of opinion.

"As to the *Globe,* that is another story. If I talk of the new doctrines to men who seem likely to have a leaning to such quirks, you might think it was a proposal to burn their house down. I tell them it is the coming thing, the most advantageous to their interests, the principle of work by which nothing is lost;—that men have oppressed men long enough, that woman is a slave, that we must strive to secure the triumph of the great Idea of thrift, and achieve a more rational co-ordination of Society—in short, all the rhodomontade at my command. All in vain! As soon as I start on this subject, these country louts shut up their cupboards as if I had come to steal something, and beg me to be off.

"What fools these owls are! The *Globe* is nowhere.—I told them so. I

said, "You are too advanced. You are getting forward, and that is all very well; but you must have something to show. In the provinces they want to see results.' However, I have got a hundred *Globes;* and, seeing the density of these country noodles, it is really a miracle. But I promise them such a heap of fine things that be hanged if I know how the Globules, or Globists, or Globites, or Globians are ever going to give them. However, as they assured me that they would arrange the world far better than it is arranged at present, I lead the way and prophesy good things at ten francs per head.

"There is a farmer who thought it must have to do with soils, by reason of the name, and I rammed the *Globe* down his throat; he will take to it, I feel sure; he has a prominent forehead, and men with prominent foreheads are always ideologists.

"But as to the *Children!* give me the *Children.* I got two thousand *Children* between Paris and Blois—a nice little turn! And there is less waste of words. You show the picture to the mother on the sly, so that the child wants to see; then, of course, the child sees; and he tugs at mamma's skirts till he gets his paper, because 'Daddy has hisn paper.' Mamma's gown cost twenty francs, and she does not want it torn by the brat; the paper costs but six francs, that is cheaper; so the subscription is dragged out. It is a capital, and meets a real want—something between the sugar-plum and the picture-book, the two eternal cravings of childhood. And they can read, too, these frenzied brats.

"Here, at the table-d'hôte, I had a dispute about newspapers and my opinions. I was sitting, peacefully eating, by the side of a man in a white hat who was reading the *Débats.* Said I to my self, 'I must give him a taste of my eloquence. Here is a man who is all for the dynasty; I must try to catch him. Such a triumph would be a splendid forecast of success as a Minister. So I set to work, beginning by praising his paper. It was a precious long job, I can tell you. From one thing to another I began to overrule my man, giving him four-horse speeches, arguments in F Sharp, and all the precious rhodomontade. Everybody was listening, and I saw a man with *July* in his mustaches, ready to bite for the *Mouvement.* But, by ill-luck, I don't know how I let slip the word *ganache* (old woman). Away went my dynastic white hat—and a bad hat too, a Lyons hat, half-silk and half-cotton—with the bit between his teeth in a fury. So I put on my grand air—you know it—and I say to him, 'Heyday, monsieur, you are a hot pot! If you are vexed, I am ready to answer for my words. I fought in July——'—'Though I am the father of a family,' says he, 'I am ready——'—'You are the father of a family, my dear sir,' say I. 'You have children?'—'Yes, monsieur.'—'Of eleven?'—'Thereabouts.'—'Well, then, monsieur, *The Children's Magazine* is just about to be published—six francs per annum, one number a month, two columns, contributors of the highest literary rank, got up in the best style, good paper, illustrations from drawings by our first artists, genuine India paper proofs, and colors that will not fade.' And then I give him a broadside. The father is overpowered! The squabble ends in a subscription.

"'No one but Gaudissart can play that game,' cried little tomtit Lamard to that long noodle Bulot when he told him the story at the café.

"To-morrow I am off to Amboise. I shall do Amboise in two days, and write next from Tours, where I am going to try my hand on the dealiest country from the point of view of intelligence and speculation. But on the honor of Gaudissart, they will be done, they *shall* be done! Done brown! By-by, little one; love me long, and be true to me. Fidelity through thick and thin is one of the characteristics of the free woman. Who kisses your eyes?

"Yours, FÉLIX forever."

Five days later Gaudissart set out one morning from the Faisan hotel, where he put up at Tours, and went to Vouvray, a rich and populous district where the public mind seemed to him to be open to conviction. He was trotting along the river quay on his nag, thinking no more of the speeches he was about to make than an actor thinks of the part he has played a hundred times. Gaudissart the Great cantered on, admiring the landscape, and thinking of nothing, never dreaming that the happy valleys of Vouvray were to witness the overthrow of his commercial infallibility.

It will here be necessary to give the reader some insight into the public spirit of Touraine. The peculiar wit of a sly romancer, full of banter and epigram, which stamps every page of Rabelais's work, is the faithful expression of the Tourangeau nature, of an intellect as keen and polished as it must inevitably be in a province where the Kings of France long held their Court; an ardent, artistic, poetical, and luxurious nature, but prompt to forget its first impulse. The softness of the atmosphere, the beauty of the climate, a certain ease of living and simplicity of manners, soon stifle the feeling for art, narrow the most expansive heart, and corrode the most tenacious will.

Transplant the native of Touraine, and his qualities develop and lead to great things, as has been proved in the most dissimilar ways, by Rabelais and by Semblançay; by Plantin the printer and by Descartes; by Boucicault, the Napoleon of his day; by Pinaigrier, who painted the greater part of our cathedral glass; by Verville and Courier. But, left at home, the countryman of Touraine, so remarkable elsewhere, remains like the Indian on his rug, like the Turk on his divan. He uses his wit to make fun of his neighbor, to amuse himself, and to live happy to the end of his days. Touraine is the true Abbey of Thelema, so much praised in Gargantua's book. Consenting nuns may be found there, as in the poet's dream, and the good cheer sung so loudly by Rabelais is supreme.

As to his indolence, it is sublime, and well characterized in the popular witticism: "Tourangeau, will you have some broth?"—"Yes."—"Then bring your bowl."—"I am no longer hungry."

Is it to the glee of the vinedresser, to the harmonious beauty of the loveliest scenery in France, or to the perennial peace of a province which has always escaped the invading armies of the foreigner, that the soft indifference of those mild and easy habits is due? To this question there is no answer. Go your-

self to that Turkey in France, and there you will stay, indolent, idle, and happy. Though you were as ambitious as Napoleon, or a poet like Byron, an irresistible, indescribable influence would compel you to keep your poetry to yourself, and reduce your most ambitious schemes to day-dreams.

Gaudissart the Great was fated to meet in Vouvray one of those indigenous wags whose mockery is offensive only by its absolute perfection of fun, and with whom he had a deadly battle. Rightly or wrongly, your Tourangeau likes to come into his father's property. Hence the doctrines of Saint-Simon were held particularly odious, and heartily abused in those parts; still, only as things are hated and abused in Touraine, with the disdain and lofty pleasantry worthy of the land of good stories and jokes played between neighbors—a spirit which is vanishing day by day before what Lord Byron called English Cant.

After putting up his horse at the Soleil d'Or, kept by one Mitouflet, a discharged grenadier of the Imperial Guard, who had married a wealthy mistress of vinelands, and to whose care he solemnly confided his steed, Gaudissart, for his sins, went first to the prime wit of Vouvray, the life and soul of the district, the jester whose reputation and nature alike made it incumbent on him to keep his neighbors' spirits up. This rustic Figaro, a retired dyer, was the happy possessor of seven or eight thousand francs a year, of a pretty house on the slope of a hill, of a plump little wife, and of robust health. For ten years past he had had nothing to do but to take care of his garden and his wife, to get his daughter married, to play his game of an evening, to keep himself informed of all the scandal that came within his jurisdiction, to give trouble at elections, to squabble with the great land-owners, and arrange big dinners; to air himself in the quay, inquire what was going on in the town, and bother the priest; and, for dramatic interest to look out for the sale of a plot of ground that cut into the ring fence of his vineyard. In short, he lived the life of Touraine, the life of a small country town.

At the same time, he was the most important of the minor notabilities of the place, and the leader of the small proprietors—a jealous and envious class, chewing the cud of slander and calumny against the aristocracy, and repeating them with relish, grinding everything down to one level, hostile to every form of superiority, scorning it indeed, with the admirable coolness of ignorance.

M. Vernier—so this little great man of the place was named—was finishing his breakfast, between his wife and his daughter, when Gaudissart made his appearance in the dining-room—one of the most cheerful dining-rooms for miles round, with a view from the windows over the Loire and the Cher.

"Is it to M. Vernier himself that I have the honor——?" said the traveler, bending his vertebral column with so much grace that it seemed to be elastic.

"Yes, monsieur," said the wily dyer, interrupting him with a scrutinizing glance, by which he at once took the measure of the man he had to do with.

"I have come, monsieur," Gaudissart went on, "to request the assistance of your enlightenment to direct me in this district where, as I learn from Mitouflet,

you exert the greatest influence. I am an emissary, monsieur, to this department in behalf of an undertaking of the highest importance, backed by bankers who are anxious——"

"Anxious to swindle us!" said Vernier, laughing, long since used to deal with the commercial traveler and to follow his game.

"Just so," replied Gaudissart the Great with perfect impudence. "But, as you very well know, sir, since you are so clear-sighted, people are not to be swindled unless they think it to their interest to allow themselves to be swindled. I beg you will not take me for one of the common ruck of commercial gentlemen who trust to cunning or importunity to win success. I am no longer a *traveler;* I was one, monsieur, and I glory in it. But I have now a mission of supreme importance, which ought to make every man of superior mind regard me as devoted to the enlightenment of his fellow-countrymen. Be kind enough to hear me, monsieur, and you will find that you will have profited greatly by the half-hour's conversation I beg you to grant me. The great Paris bankers have not merely lent their names to this concern, as to certain discreditable speculations such as I call mere rat-traps. No, no, nothing of the kind. I can assure you, I would never allow myself to engage in promoting such booby-traps. No, monsieur, the soundest and most respectable houses in Paris are concerned in the undertaking, both as shareholders and as guarantors——"

And Guadissart unrolled the frippery of his phrases, while M. Vernier listened with an affectation of interest that quite deceived the orator. But at the word guarantor, Vernier had, in fact, ceased to heed this bagman's rhetoric; he was bent on playing him some sly trick, so as to clear off this kind of Parisian caterpillar, once for all, from a district justly regarded as barbarian by speculators, who can get no footing there.

At the head of a delightful valley, known as the Vallée Coquette, from its curves and bends, new at every step and each more charming than the last, whether you go up or down the winding slope, there dwelt, in a little house surrounded by a vineyard, a more than half-crazy creature named Margaritis. This man, an Italian by birth, was married, but had no children, and his wife took care of him with a degree of courage that was universally admired; for Mme. Margaritis certainly ran some risk in living with a man who, among other manias, insisted on always having two long knives about him, not infrequently threatening her with them. But who does not know the admirable devotion with which country people care for afflicted creatures, perhaps in consequence of the discredit that attaches to a middle-class wife if she abandons her child or her husband to the tender mercies of a public asylum? Again, the aversion is well known which country folks feel for paying a hundred louis, or perhaps a thousand crowns, the price charged at Charenton or in a private asylum. If anyone spoke to Mme. Margaritis of Dubuisson, Esquirol, Blanche, or other mad-doctors, she preferred, with lofty indignation, to keep her three thousand francs and hergoodman.

The inexplicable caprices of this worthy's insanity being closely con-

nected with the course of my story, it is needful to mention some of his more conspicuous vagaries. Margaritis would always go out as soon as it began to rain, to walk bareheaded among his vines. Indoors he was perpetually asking for the newspaper; just to satisfy him, his wife or the maid-servant would give him an old *Journal d'Indreet-Loire,* and for seven years he had never discovered that it was always the same copy. A doctor might perhaps have found it interesting to note the connection between his attacks of asking for the paper and the variations in the weather. The poor madman's constant occupation was to study the state of the sky and its effect on the vines.

When his wife had company, which was almost every evening—for the neighbors, in pity for her position, came in to play boston with her—Margaritis sat in silence in a corner, never moving; but when ten o'clock struck by a clock in a tall wooden case, he rose at the last stroke with the mechanical precision of the figures moved by a spring in a German toy, went slowly up to the card-players, looked at them with eyes strangely like the automatic gaze of the Greeks and Turks to be seen in the Boulevard du Temple in Paris, and said, "Go away!"

At times, however, this man recovered his natural wits, and could then advise his wife very shrewdly as to the sale of her wine; but at those times he was exceedingly troublesome, stealing dainties out of the cupboards and eating them in secret.

Occasionally, when the customary visitors came in, he answered their inquiries civilly, but he more often replied quite at random. To a lady who asked him, "How are you to-day, M. Margaritis?"—"I have shaved," he would reply, "and you?"

"Are you better, monsieur?" another would say. "Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" was the answer. But he usually looked at them with a blank face, not speaking a word, and then his wife would say, "The goodman cannot hear anything to-day." Twice or thrice in the course of five years, always about the time of the equinox, he had flown into a rage at this remark, had drawn a knife, and shrieked, "That hussy disgraces me!"

Still, he drank, ate, and walked out like any man in perfect health; and by degrees everyone was accustomed to pay him no more respect or attention than if he had been a clumsy piece of furniture.

Of all his eccentricities, there was one to which no one had ever been able to discover a clew; for the wise heads of the district had in the course of time accounted for, or explained, most of the poor lunatic's maddest acts. He insisted on always having a sack of flour in the house and on keeping two casks of wine from the vintage, never allowing anyone to touch either the flour or the wine. But when the month of June came round, he began to be anxious to sell the sack and the wine-barrels with all the fretfulness of a madman. Mme. Margaritis generally told him that she had sold the two puncheons at an exorbitant price, and gave him the money, which he then hid without his wife or his servant ever having succeeded, even by watching, in discovering the hiding-place.

The day before Gaudissart's visit to

Vouvray, Mme. Margaritis had had more difficulty than ever in managing her husband, who had an attack of lucid reason.

"I declare I do not know how I shall get through to-morrow," said she to Mme. Vernier. "Only fancy, my old man insisted on seeing his two casks of wine. And he gave me no peace all day till I showed him two full puncheons. Our neighbor, Pierre Champlain, luckily had two casks he had not been able to sell, and at my request he rolled them into our cellar. And then what must he want, after seeing the casks, but nothing will content him but selling them himself."

Mme. Vernier had just been telling her husband of this difficult state of things when Gaudissart walked in. At the commercial traveler's very first words Vernier determined to let him loose on old Margaritis.

"Monsier," replied the dyer, when Gaudissart the Great had exhausted his first broadside, "I will not conceal from you that your undertaking will meet with great obstacles in this district. In our part of the world the good folks go on, bodily, in a way of their own; it is a country where no new idea can ever take root. We live as our fathers did, amusing ourselves by eating four meals a day, occupying ourselves by looking after our vineyards, and selling our wine at a good price. Our notion of business is, very honestly, to sell things for more than they cost. We shall go on in that rut, and neither God nor the Devil can get us out of it. But I will give you some good advice, and good advice is worth an eye. We have in this neighborhood a retired banker, in whose judgment I myself have the utmost confidence, and if you win his support you shall have mine. If your proposals offer any substantial prospects, and we are convinced of it, M. Margaritis's vote carries mine with it, and there are twenty well-to-do houses in Vouvray where purses will be opened and your panacea will be tried."

As she heard him mention the madman, Mme. Vernier looked up at her husband.

"By the way, I believe my wife was just going to call on Mme. Margaritis with a neighbor of ours. Wait a minute, and the ladies will show you the way.—You can go round and pick up Mme. Fontanier" said the old dyer, with a wink at his wife.

This suggestion that she should take with her the merriest, the most voluble, the most facetious of all the merry wives of Vouvray, was as much as to tell Mme. Vernier to secure a witness to report the scene which would certainly take place between the bagman and the lunatic, so as to amuse the country with it for a month to come. M. and Mme. Vernier played their parts so well that Gaudissart had no suspicions, and rushed headlong into the snare. He politely offered his arm to Mme. Vernier, and fancied he had quite made a conquest of both ladies on the way, being dazzlingly witty, and pelting them with waggery and puns which they did not understand.

The so-called banker lived in the first house at the opening into the Vallée Coquette. It was called La Fuye, and was not particularly remarkable. On the ground floor was a large paneled sitting-room, with a bedroom on

each side for the master and mistress. The entrance was through a hall, where they dined, opening into the kitchen. This ground floor, quite lacking the external elegance for which even the humblest dwellings in Touraine are noted, was crowned by attics, to which an outside stair led up, built against one of the gable ends, and covered in by a lean-to roof. A small garden, full of marigolds, seringa, and elder, divided the house from the vineyard. Round the courtyard were the buildings for the winepresses and storage.

Margaritis, seated in a yellow Utrecht velvet chair by the window in the drawing-room, did not rise as the ladies came in with Gaudissart; he was thinking of the sale of his butts of wine. He was a lean man, with a pear-shaped head, bald above the forehead, and furnished with a few hairs at the back. His deep-set eyes, shaded by thick black brows, and with dark rings round them, his nose as thin as the blade of a knife, his high cheekbones and hollow cheeks, his generally oblong outline—everything, down to his absurdly long flat chin, contributed to give a strange look to his countenance, suggesting that of a professor of rhetoric—or of a ragpicker.

"M. Margaritis," said Mme. Vernier, "come, wake up! Here is a gentleman sent to you by my husband, and you are to hear him with attention. Put aside your mathematical calculations and talk to him."

At this speech the madam rose, looked at Gaudissart, waved to him to be seated, and said—

"Let us talk, monsieur."

The three women went into Mme. Margaritis's room, leaving the door open so as to hear all that went on, and intervene in case of need. Hardly were they seated when M. Vernier came in quietly from the vineyard, and made them let him in through the window without a sound.

"You were in business, monsieur?" Gaudissart began.

"Public business," replied Margaritis, interrupting him. "I pacified Calabria when Murat was King."

"Heyday, he has been Calabria now!" said Vernier in a whisper.

"Oh, indeed!" said Gaudissart. "Then, monsieur, we cannot fail to come to an understanding."

"I am listening," replied Margaritis, settling himself in the attitude of a man sitting for his portrait.

"Monsieur," said Gaudissart, fidgeting with his watch-key, which he twisted round and round without thinking of what he was doing, with a regular rotatory twirl which engaged in madman's attention, and perhaps helped to keep him quiet; "monsieur, if you were not a man of superior intelligence"—Margaritis bowed—"I should restrict myself to setting forth the material advantages of this concern; but its psychological value is worthy of your attention. Mark me! Of all forms of social wealth, time is the most precious; to save time is to grow rich, is it not? Now is there anything which takes up more time in our lives than anxiety as to what I may call boiling the pot—a homely metaphor, but clearly stating the question? Or is there anything which consumes more time than the lack of a guarantee to offer as security to those of whom you ask money when, though impecunious

for a time, you yet are rich in prospects?"

"Money—you have come to the point."

"Well, then, monsieur, I am the emissary to the Departments of a company of bankers and capitalists, who have perceived what enormous loss of time, and consequently of productive intelligence and activity, is thus entailed on men with the future before them. Now, the idea has occurred to us that, to such men, we may capitalize the future, we may discount their talents, by discounting what?—why, their time, and securing its value to their heirs. This is not merely to economize time; it is to price it, to value it, to represent in a pecuniary form the products you may expect to obtain in a certain unknown time by representing the moral qualities with which you are gifted, and which are, monsieur, a living force, like a waterfall, or a steam engine of three, ten, twenty, fifty horsepower. This is progress, a great movement towards a better order of things, a movement due to the energy of our age—an essentially progressive age, as I can prove to you when we come to the conception of a more logical co-ordination of social interests.

"I will explain myself by tangible instances. I quit the purely abstract argument which we, in our line, call the mathematics of ideas. Supposing that instead of being a man of property, living on your dividends, you are a painter, a musician, a poet——"

"I am a painter," the other put in by way of parenthesis.

"Very good, so be it, since you take my metaphor; you are a painter, you have a great future before you. But I am going further——"

At those words the lunatic studied Gaudissart uneasily to see if he meant to go away, but was reassured on seeing him remain seated.

"You are nothing at all," Gaudissart went on, "but you feel yourself?"

"I feel myself," said Margaritis.

"You say to yourself, 'I shall be a Minister'; very good. You, the painter, you, the artist, the man of letters, the future Minister, you calculate your prospects, you value them at so much—you estimate them, let us say—at a hundred thousand crowns——"

"And you have brought me a hundred thousand crowns?" said the lunatic.

"Yes, monsieur, you will see. Either your heirs will get them without fail, in the event of your death, since the company pledges itself to pay, or, if you live, you get them by your works of art or your fortunate speculations. Nay, if you have made a mistake, you can begin all over again. But, when once you have fixed the value, as I have had the honor of explaining to you, of your intellectual capital—for it is intellectual capital, bear that clearly in mind, monsieur——"

"I understand," said the madman.

"You sign a policy of insurance with this company, which credits you with the value of a hundred thousand francs—you, the painter——"

"I am a painter," said Margaritis.

"You the musician, the Minister—and promises to pay that sum to your family, your heirs, if, in consequence of your demise, the hopes of the income to be derived from your intellectual capital should be lost. The payment of the premium is thus all that is needed to consolidate your——"

"*Your* cash-box," said the madman, interrupting him.

"Well, of course, monsieur; I see that you understand business."

"Yes," said Margaritis, "I was the founder of the Banque Territoriale, Rue des Fossés-Montmartre in Paris, in 1798."

"For," Gaudissart went on, "in order to repay the intellectual capital with which each of us credits himself, must not all who insure pay a certain premium—three per cent., annually three per cent.? And thus, by paying a very small sum, a mere nothing, you are protecting your family against the disastrous effects of your death."

"But I am alive," objected the lunatic.

"Ah yes, and if you live to be old—that is the objection commonly raised, the objection of the vulgar, and you must see that if we had not anticipated and annihilated it, we should be unworthy to become—what? What are we, in fact?—The bookkeepers of the great Bank of Intellect.

"Monsieur, I do not say this to you; but wherever I go, I meet with men who pretend to teach something new, to bring forward some fresh argument against those who have grown pale with studying the business—on my word of honor, it is contemptible! However, the world is made so, and I have no hope of reforming it.—Your objection, monsieur, is absurd——"

"*Quésaco?* (What!)" said Margaritis.

"For this reason. If you should live, and if you have the money credited to you in your policy of insurance against the chances of death—you follow me——"

"I follow."

"Well, then, it is because you have succeeded in your undertakings! And you will have succeeded solely in consequence of that policy of insurance; for, by ridding yourself of all the anxieties which are involved in having a wife at your heels, and children whom your death may reduce to beggary, you simply double your chances of success. If you are at the top of the tree, you have grasped the intellectual capital compared with which the insurance money is a trifle, a mere trifle."

"An admirable idea!"

"Is it not, monsieur?—I call this beneficent institution the Mutual Insurance against beggary!—or, if you prefer it, the Office for discounting Talent. For talent, sir, talent is a bill of exchange, bestowed by nature on a man of genius, and which is often at long date—ha, hah!"

"Very handsome usury," cried Margaritis.

"The deuce! He is sharp enough, this old boy! I have made a mistake; I must attack this man on higher ground with palaver A1," thought Gaudissart.—"Not at all, monsieur," said he aloud. "To you who——"

"Will you take a glass of wine?" asked Margaritis.

"With pleasure," said Gaudissart.

"Wife! give us a bottle of the wine of which two casks are left.—You are here in the headquarters of Vouvray," said the master, pointing to his vines. "The Clos Margaritis."

The maid brought in glasses and a bottle of the wine of 1819. The worthy lunatic filled a glass with scrupulous care, and solemnly presented it to Gaudissart, who drank it.

"But you are playing me some trick, monsieur," said the commercial traveler. "This is Madeira, genuine Madeira!"

"I should think it is!" replied the lunatic. "The only fault of the Vouvray wine, monsieur, is that it cannot be used as an *ordinaire*, as a table wine. It is too generous, too strong; and it is sold in Paris as Madeira after being doctored with brandy. Our wine is so rich that many of the Paris merchants, when the French crop is insufficient for Holland and Belgium, buy our wine to mix with the wine grown about Paris, and so manufacture a Bordeaux wine.—But what you are drinking at this moment, my dear and very amiable sir, is fit for a king; it is the head of Vouvray. I have two casks, only two casks of it. Persons who appreciate the finest wines, high-class wines, and like to put a wine on their table which has a character not to be met with in the regular trade, apply direct to us. Now, do you happen to know anyone——"

"Let us get back to our business," said Gaudissart.

"We are there, monsieur," replied the madman. "My wine is heady, and you are talking of capital; the etymology of capital is *caput*—head.—Heh?—The Head of Vouvray—the connection is obvious."

"As I was saying," persisted Gaudissart, "either you have realized your intellectual capital——"

"I have realized, monsieur.—Will you take my two puncheons? I will give you favorable terms."

"No," said Gaudissart the Great, "I allude to the insurance of intellectual capital and policies on life. I will resume the thread of my argument."

The madman grew calmer, sat down, and looked at Gaudissart.

"I was saying, monsieur, that if you should die, the capital is paid over to your family without difficulty."

"Without difficulty."

"Yes, excepting in the case of suicide——"

"A question for the law."

"No, sir. As you know, suicide is an act that is always easily proved."

"In France," said Margaritis. "But——"

"But abroad," said Gaudissart. "Well, monsieur, to conclude that part of the question, I may say at once that death abroad, or on the field of battle, are not included——"

"What do you insure, then? Nothing whatever," cried the other. "Now, my bank was based on——"

"Nothing whatever, sir?" cried Gaudissart, interrupting him. "Nothing whatever? How about illness, grief, poverty, and the passions? But we need not discuss exceptional cases."

"No, we will not discuss them," said the madman.

"What, then, is the upshot of this transaction?" exclaimed Gaudissart. "To you, as a banker, I will simply state the figures.—You have a man, a man with a future, well dressed, living on his art—he wants money, he asks for it—a blank. Civilization at large will refuse to advance money to this man, who, in thought, dominates over civilization, who will some day dominate over it by his brush, his chisel, by words, or ideas, or a system. Civilization is merciless. She has no bread for the great men who provide her with luxuries; she feeds

them on abuse and mockery, the gilded slut! The expression is a strong one, but I will not retract it.—Well, your misprized great man comes to us; we recognize his greatness, we bow to him respectfully, we listen to him, and he says to us—

"'Gentlemen of the Insurance Company, my life is worth so much; I will pay you so much per cent. on my works.'—Well, what do we do? At once, without grudging, we admit him to the splendid banquet of civilization as an important guest——"

"Then you must have wine," said the madman.

"As an important guest. He signs his policy, he takes our contemptible paper rags—mere miserable rags, which, rags as they are, have more power than his genius had. For, in fact, if he wants money, everybody on seeing that sheet of paper is ready to lend to him. On the Bourse, at the bankers', anywhere, even at the money-lenders', he can get money—because he can offer security.—Well, sir, was not this a gulf that needed filling in the social system?

"But, sir, this is but a part of the business undertaken by the Life Insurance Company. We also insure debtors on a different scale of premiums. We offer annuities on terms graduated by age, on an infinitely more favorable calculation than has as yet been allowed in tontines based on tables of mortality now known to be inaccurate. Our Society operating on the mass, our annuitants need have on fear of the reflections that sadden their latter years, in themselves sad enough; such thoughts as must necessarily invade them when their money is in private hands. So, you see, monsieur, we have taken the measure of life under every aspect——"

"Sucked it at every pore," said Margaritis.—"But take a glass of wine; you have certainly earned it. You must lay some velvet on your stomach if you want to keep your jaw in working order. And the wine of Vouvray, monsieur, is, when old enough, pure velvet."

"And what do you think of it all?" said Gaudissart, emptying his glass.

"It is all very finè, very new, very advantageous; but I think better of the system of loans on land that was in use in my bank in the Rue des Fossés-Montmartre."

"There you are right, monsieur," said Gaudissart, "that has been worked and worked out, done and done again. We now have the Mortgage Society which lends on real estate, and works that system on a large scale. But is not that a mere trifle in comparison with our idea of consolidating possibilities? Consolidating hopes, coagulating—financially—each man's desires for wealth, and securing their realization. It remained for our age, sir, an age of transition—of transition and progress combined!"

"Aye, of progress," said the lunatic. "I like progress, especially such as brings good times for the wine-trade——"

"The *Times—le Temps—!*" exclaimed Gaudissart, not heeding the madman's meaning. "A poor paper, sir; if you take it in, I pity you."

"The newspaper?" cried Margaritis. "To be sure, I am devoted to the newspaper.—Wife, wife! where is the newspaper?" he went on, turning towards the door.

"Very good, monsieur; if you take an

interest in the papers, we shall certainly agree."

"Yes, sir; but before you hear the paper, confess that this wine is——"

"Delicious," said Gaudissart.

"Come on, then, we will finish the bottle between us." The madman a quarter filled his own glass, and poured out a bumper for Gaudissart.

"As I say, sir, I have two casks of that very wine. If you think it good, and are disposed to deal——"

"The fathers of the Saint-Simonian doctrine have, in fact, commissioned me to forward them such products as—— But let me tell you of their splendid newspaper. You, who understand the insurance business, and are ready to help me to extend it in this district——"

"Certainly," said Margaritis, "if——"

"Of course, if I take your wine. And your wine is very good, monsieur; it goes to the spot."

"Champagne is made of it. There is a gentleman here, from Paris, who has come to make champagne at Tours."

"I quite believe it.—The *Globe,* which you must have heard mentioned——"

"I know it well," said Margaritis.

"I was sure of it," said Gaudissart. "Monsieur, you have a powerful head—a bump which is known as the equine head. There is something of the horse in the head of every great man. Now a man can be a genius and live unknown. It is a trick that has happened often enough to men who, in spite of their talents, live in obscurity, and which nearly befell the great Saint-Simon and M. Vico, a man of mark who is making his way. He is coming on well is Vico, and I am glad. Here we enter on the new theory and formula of the human race. Attention, monsieur——"

"Attention!" echoed Margaritis.

"The oppression of man by man ought to have ended, monsieur, on the day when Christ—I do not say Jesus Christ, I say Christ—came to proclaim the equality of men before God. But has not this equality been hitherto the most illusory chimera? — Now, Saint-Simon supplements Christ. Christ has served His time——"

"Then, is He released?" asked Margaritis.

"He has served His time from the point of view of Liberalism. There is something stronger to guide us now—the new creed, free and individual creativeness, social co-ordination by which each one shall receive his social reward equitably, in accordance with his work, and no longer be the hireling of individuals who, incapable themselves, make *all* labor for the benefit of one alone. Hence the doctrine——"

"And what becomes of the servants?" asked Margaritis.

"They remain servants, monsieur, if they are only capable of being servants."

"Then of what use is the doctrine?"

"Oh, to judge of that, monsieur, you must take your stand on the highest point of view whence you can clearly command a general prospect of humanity. This brings us to Ballanche? Do you know M. Ballanche?"

"It is my principal business," said the madman, who misunderstood the name for *la planche* (boards or staves).

"Very good," said Gaudissart. "Then, sir, if the palingenesis and successive developments of the spiritualized *Globe* touch you, delight you, appeal to you,—

then, my dear sir, the newspaper called the *Globe,* a fine name, accurately expressing its mission—the *Globe* is the cicerone who will explain to you every morning the fresh conditions under which, in quite a short time, the world will undergo a political and moral change."

"*Quésaco?*" said Margaritis.

"I will explain the argument by a simile," said Gaudissart. "If, as children, our nurses took us to Séraphin, do not we older men need a presentment of the future?—These gentlemen——"

"Do they drink wine?"

"Yes, monsieur. Their house is established, I may say, on an admirable footing—a prophetic footing; handsome receptions, all the bigwigs, splendid parties."

"To be sure," said the madman, "the laborers who pull down must be fed as well as those who build."

"All the more so, monsieur, when they pull down with one hand and build up with the other, as the apostles of the *Globe* do."

"Then they must have wine, the wine of Vouvray; the two casks I have left—three hundred bottles for a hundred francs—a mere song!"

"How much a bottle does that come to?" said Gaudissart. "Let me see; there is the carriage, and the town dues—not seven sous—a very good bargain." ("I have caught my man," thought Gaudissart. "You want to sell the wine which I want, and I can get the whip hand of you.") "They pay more for other wine," he went on. "Well, monsieur, men who haggle are sure to agree.—Speak honestly; you have considerable influence in the district?"

"I believe so," said the madman. "The head of Vouvray, you see."

"Well, and you perfectly understand the working of the Intellectual Capital Insurance?"

"Perfectly."

"You have realized the vast proportions of the *Globe?*"

"Twice—on foot."

Gaudissart did not heed him; he was entangled in the maze of his own thoughts, and listening to his own words, assured of success.

"Well, seeing the position you hold, I can understand that at your age you have nothing to insure. But, monsieur, you can persuade those persons in this district to insure who, either by their personal merits or by the precarious position of their families, may be anxious to provide for the future. And so, if you will subscribe to the *Globe,* and if you will give me the support of your authority in this district to invite the investment of capital in annuities—for annuities are popular in the provinces—well, we may come to an agreement as to the purchase of the two casks of wine.—Will you take in the *Globe?*"

"I live on the Globe."

"Will you support me with the influential residents in the district?"

"I support——"

"And——"

"And?——"

"And I—— But you will pay your subscription to the *Globe?*"

"The *Globe*—a good paper—an annuity?"

"An annuity, monsieur?—Well, yes, you are right; for it is full of life, of vitality, and learning; choke-full of learning; a handsome paper, well printed,

a good color, thick paper. Oh, it is none of your flimsy shoddy, mere waste-paper that tears if you look at it. And it goes deep, gives you reasoning that you may think over at leisure, and pleasant occupation here in the depths of the country."

"That is the thing for me," said the madman.

"It costs a mere trifle—eighty francs a year."

"That is not the thing for me," said Margaritis.

"Monsieur," said Gaudissart, "of course you have little children?"

"Some," said Margaritis, who misunderstood *have* for *love*.

"Well, then the *Journal des Enfants*, seven francs a year——"

"Buy my two casks of wine," said Margaritis, "and I will subscribe to your children's paper; that is the thing for me; a fine idea. Intellectual tyranny—a child—heh? Does not man tyrannize over man?"

"Right you are," said Gaudissart.

"Right I am."

"And you consent to steer me round the district?"

"Round the district."

"I have your approbation?"

"You have."

"Well, then, sir, I will take your two casks of wine at a hundred francs——"

"No, no, a hundred and ten."

"Monsieur, a hundred and ten, I will say a hundred and ten, but it is a hundred and ten to the gentlemen of the paper and one hundred to me. If I find you a buyer, you owe me a commission."

"A hundred and twenty to them. No commission to the commissioners."

"Very neat. And not only witty, but spirited."

"No, spiritous."

"Better and better—like Nicolet."

"That is my way," said the lunatic. "Come and look at my vineyards?"

"With pleasure," said Gaudissart. "That wine goes strangely to the head."

And Gaudissart the Great went out with M. Margaritis, who led him from terrace to terrace, from vine to vine.

The three ladies and M. Vernier could laugh now at their ease, as they saw the two men from the window gesticulating, haranguing, standing still, and going on again, talking vehemently.

"Why did your good man take him out of hearing?" said Vernier. At last Margaritis came in again with the commercial traveler; they were both walking at a great pace as if in a hurry to conclude the business.

"And the countryman, I bet, has been too many for the Parisian," said Vernier.

In point of fact, Gaudissart the Great, sitting at one end of the card-table, to the great delight of Margaritis, wrote an order for the delivery of two casks of wine. Then, after reading through the contract, Margaritis paid him down seven francs as a subscription to the children's paper.

"Till to-morrow, then, monsieur," said Gaudissart the Great, twisting his watch-key; "I shall have the honor of calling for you to-morrow. You can send the wine to Paris direct to the address I have given you, and forward it as soon as you receive the money."

Gaudissart was from Normandy; there were two sides to every bargain he made, and he required an agreement from M. Margaritis, who with a mad-

man's glee in gratifying his favorite whim, signed, after reading, a contract to deliver two casks of wine of Clos Margaritis.

So Gaudissart went off in high spirits, humming *Le roi des mers, prends plus bas,* to the Golden Sun Inn, where he naturally had a chat with the host while waiting for dinner. Mitouflet was an old soldier, simple but cunning, as peasants are, but never laughing at a joke, as being a man who is accustomed to the roar of a cannon, and to passing a jest in the ranks.

"You have some very tough customers hereabouts," said Gaudissart, leaning against the door-post and lighting his cigar at Mitouflet's pipe.

"How is that?" asked Mitouflet.

"Well, men who ride roughshod over political and financial theories."

"Whom have you been talking to, if I may make so bold?" asked the innkeeper guilelessly, while he skillfully expectorated after the manner of smokers.

"To a wideawake chap named Margaritis."

Mitouflet glanced at his customer, twice, with calm irony.

"Oh yes, he is wideawake, no doubt! He knows too much for most people; they don't follow him——"

"I can quite believe it. He has a thorough knowledge of the higher branches of finance."

"Yes, indeed," said Mitouflet; "and for my part, I have always thought it a pity that he should be mad."

"Mad? How?"

"How? Why, mad, as a madman is mad," repeated the innkeeper. "But he is not dangerous, and his wife looks after him.—So you understood each other? That's funny," said the relentless Mitouflet, with the utmost calm.

"Funny?" cried Gaudissart. "Funny? But your precious M. Vernier was making a fool of me!"

"Did he send you there?" said Mitouflet.

"Yes."

"I say, wife," cried the innkeeper, "listen to that! M. Vernier actually sent monsieur to talk to old Margaritis——"

"And what did you find to say to each other, my good gentleman," said the woman, "since he is quite mad?"

"He sold me two casks of wine."

"And you bought them?"

"Yes."

"But it is his mania to want to sell wine; he has none."

"Very good!" cried the bagman. "In the first place, I will go and thank M. Vernier."

Gaudissart, boiling with rage, went off to the house of the ex-dyer, whom he found in his parlor laughing with the neighbors, to whom he was already telling the story.

"Monsieur," said this Prince of Bagmen, his eyes glaring with wrath, "you are a sneak and a blackguard; and if you are not the lowest of turnkeys—a class I rank below the convicts—you will give me satisfaction for the insult you have done me by placing me in the power of a man whom you knew to be mad. Do you hear me, M. Vernier, the dyer?"

This was the speech Gaudissart had prepared, as a tragedian prepares his entrance on the stage.

"What next?" retorted Vernier, encouraged by the presence of his neigh-

bors. "Do you think we have not good right to make game of a gentleman who arrives at Vouvray with an air and a flourish, to get our money out of us under pretense of being great men—painters, or verse-mongers—and who thus gratuitously places us on a level with a penniless horde, out at elbows, homeless and roofless? What have we done to deserve it, we who are fathers of families? A rogue, who asks us to subscribe to the *Globe*, a paper which preaches as the first law of God, if you please, that a man shall not inherit what his father and mother can leave him? On my sacred word of honor, old Marsaritis can talk more sense than that.

"And, after all, what have you to complain of? You were quite of a mind, you and he. These gentlemen can bear witness that if you had speechified to all the people in the country-side you would not have been so well understood."

"That is all very well to say, but I consider myself insulted, monsieur, and I expect satisfaction."

"Very good, sir; I consider you insulted if that will be any comfort to you, and I will not give you satisfaction, for there is not satisfaction enough in the whole silly business for me to give you any. Is he absurd, I ask you?"

At these words Gaudissart rushed on the dyer to give him a blow; but the Vouvrillons were on the alert, and threw themselves between them, so that Gaudissart the Great only hit the dyer's wig, which flew off and alighted on the head of Mlle. Claire Vernier.

"If you are not satisfied now, monsieur, I shall be at the inn till to-morrow morning; you will find me there, and ready to show you what is meant by satisfaction for an insult. I fought in July, monsieur!"

"Very well," said the dyer, "you shall fight at Vouvray; and you will stay here rather longer than you bargained for."

Gaudissart departed, pondering on this reply, which seemed to him ominous of mischief. For the first time in his life he dined cheerlessly.

The whole borough of Vouvray was in a stir over the meeting between Gaudissart and M. Vernier. A duel was a thing unheard of in this benign region.

"M. Mitouflet, I am going to fight M. Vernier to-morrow morning," said Gaudissart to his host. "I know nobody here; will you be my second?"

"With pleasure," said Mitouflet.

Gaudissart had hardly finished his dinner when Mme. Fontanier and the Mayor's deputy came to the Golden Sun, took Mitouflet aside, and represented to him what a sad thing it would be for the whole district if a violent death should occur; they described the frightful state of affairs for good Mme. Vernier, and implored him to patch the matter up so as to save the honor of the community.

"I will see to it," said the innkeeper with a wink.

In the evening Mitouflet went up to Gaudissart's room carrying pens, ink, and paper.

"What is all that?" asked Gaudissart.

"Well, as you are to fight to-morrow, I thought you might be glad to leave some little instructions, and that you might wish to write some letters, for we all have someone who is dear to us. Oh! that will not kill you. Are you a good fencer? Would you like to practice a little? I have some foils."

"I should be glad to do so."

Mitouflet fetched the foils and two masks.

"Now, let us see."

The innkeeper and the bagman stood on guard. Mitouflet, who had been an instructor of grenadiers, hit Gaudissart sixty-eight times, driving him back to the wall.

"The devil! you are good at the game!" said Gaudissart, out of breath.

"I am no match for M. Vernier."

"The deuce! Then I will fight with pistols."

"I advise you to.—You see, if you use large horse-pistols and load them to the muzzle, they are sure to kick and miss, and each man withdraws with unblemished honor. Leave me to arrange it. By the Mass, two good men would be great fools to kill each other for a jest."

"Are you sure the pistols will fire wide enough? I should be sorry to kill the man," said Gaudissart.

"Sleep easy."

Next morning the adversaries, both rather pale, met at the foot of the Pont de la Cise.

The worthy Vernier narrowly missed killing a cow that was grazing by the roadside ten yards off.

"Ah! you fired in the air!" exclaimed Gaudissart, and with these words the enemies fell into each other's arms.

"Monsieur," said the traveler, "your joke was a little rough, but it was funny. I am sorry I spoke so strongly, but I was beside myself.—I hold you a man of honor."

"Monsieur, we will get you twenty subscribers to the children's paper," replied the dyer, still rather pale.

"That being the case," said Gaudissart, "why should we not breakfast together? Men who have fought are always ready to understand each other."

"M. Mitouflet," said Gaudissart, as they went in, "there is a bailiff here, I suppose?"

"What for?"

"I mean to serve a notice on my dear little M. Margaritis, requiring him to supply me with two casks of his wine."

"But he has none," said Vernier.

"Well, monsieur, I will say no more about it for an indemnity of twenty francs. But I will not have it said in your town that you stole a march on Gaudissart the Great."

Mme. Margaritis, afraid of an action, which the plaintiff would certainly gain, brought the twenty francs to the clement bagman, who was also spared the pains of any further propaganda in one of the most jovial districts of France, and at the same time the least open to new ideas.

On his return from his tour in the southern provinces, Gaudissart the Great was traveling in the coupé of the Laffite-Caillard diligence, and had for a fellow-passenger a young man to whom, having passed Angoulême, he condescended to expatiate on the mysteries of life, fancying him, no doubt, but a baby.

On reaching Vouvray, the youth exclaimed—

"What a lovely situation!"

"Yes, monsieur," said Gaudissart, "but the land is uninhabitable by reason of the inhabitants. You would have a duel on your hands every day. Why, only three months ago I fought on that very spot"—and he pointed to the bridge—"with a confounded dyer—pistols; but—I fleeced him!"

The Napoleon of the People

PROLOGUE

For about an hour they rode at a foot pace across fields in a state of high cultivation, on which the soldier complimented the doctor; then they came down the mountain side into the township again, talking whenever the pace of their horses allowed them to do so. At last they reached a narrow glen, down which they rode into the main valley.

"I promised yesterday," Benassis said to Genestas, "to show you one of the two soldiers who left the army and came back to us after the fall of Napoleon. We shall find him somewhere hereabouts, if I am not mistaken. The mountain streams flow into a sort of natural reservoir or tarn up here; the earth they bring down has silted it up, and he is engaged in clearing it out. But if you are to take any interest in the man, I must tell you his history. His name is Gondrin. He was only eighteen years old when he was drawn in the great conscription of 1792, and drafted into a corps of gunners. He served as a private soldier in Napoleon's campaigns in Italy, followed him to Egypt, and came back from the East after the Peace of Amiens. In the time of the Empire he was incorporated in the Pontoon Troop of the Guard, and was constantly on active service in Germany; lastly, the poor fellow made the Russian campaign."

"We are brothers-in-arms then, to some extent," said Genestas; "I have made the same campaigns. Only an iron frame could stand the tricks played by so many different climates. My word for it, those who are still standing on their stumps after marching over Italy, Egypt, Germany, Portugal, and Russia must have applied to Providence and taken out a patent for living."

"Just so, you will see a solid fragment of a man," answered Benassis. "You know all about the Retreat from Moscow; it is useless to tell you about it. This man I have told you of is one of the pontooners of the Beresina; he helped to construct the bridge by which the army made the passage, and stood waist-deep in water to drive in the first piles. General Eblé, who was in command of the pontooners, could only find forty-two men who were plucky enough, in Gondrin's phrase, to tackle that business. The general himself came down to the stream to hearten and cheer the men, promising each of them a pension of a thousand francs and the Cross of the Legion of Honor. The first who went down into the Beresina had his leg taken off by a block of ice, and the man himself was washed away; but you will better understand the difficulty of the task when you hear the end of the story. Of the forty-two volunteers, Gondrin is the only one alive to-day. Thirty-nine of them lost their lives in the Beresina, and the two others died miserably in a Polish hospital.

"The poor fellow himself only returned from Wilna in 1814, to find the Bourbons restored to power. General Eblé (of whom Gondrin cannot speak without tears in his eyes) was dead. The pontooner was deaf, and his health was shattered; and as he could neither read nor write, he found no one left to help

him or to plead his cause. He begged his way to Paris, and while there made application at the War Office, not for the thousand francs of extra pension which had been promised to him, nor yet for the Cross of the Legion of Honor, but only for the bare pension due to him after twenty-two years of service, and I do not know how many campaigns. He did not obtain his pension or his traveling expenses; he did not even receive his arrears of pay. He spent a year in making fruitless solicitations, holding out his hands in vain to those whom he had saved; and at the end of it he came back here, sorely disheartened but resigned to his fate. This hero unknown to fame does draining work on the land, for which he is paid ten sous the fathom. He is accustomed to working in a marshy soil, and so, as he says, he gets jobs which no one else care to take. He can make about three francs a day by clearing out ponds, or draining meadows that lie under water. His deafness makes him seem surly, and he is not naturally inclined to say very much, but there is a good deal in him.

"We are very good friends. He dines with me on the day of Austerlitz, on the Emperor's birthday, and on the anniversary of the disaster at Waterloo, and during the dessert he always receives a napoleon to pay for his wine every quarter. Everyone in the commune shares in my feeling of respect for him; if he would allow them to support him, nothing would please them better. At every house to which he goes the people follow my example, and show their esteem by asking him to dine with them. It is a feeling of pride that leads him to work, and it is only as a portrait of the Emperor that he can be induced to take my twenty-franc piece. He has been deeply wounded by the injustice that has been done him; but I think regret for the Cross is greater than the desire for his pension.

"He has one great consolation. After the bridges had been constructed across the Beresina, General Eblé presented such of the pontooners as were not disabled to the Emperor, and Napoleon embraced poor Gondrin—perhaps but for that accolade he would have died ere now. This memory and the hope that some day Napoleon will return are all that Gondrin lives by. Nothing will ever persuade him that Napoleon is dead, and so convinced is he that the Emperor's captivity is wholly and solely due to the English, that I believe he would be ready on the slightest pretext to take the life of the best-natured alderman that ever traveled for pleasure in foreign parts."

"Let us go on as fast as possible!" cried Genestas. He had listened to the doctor's story with rapt attention, and now seemed to recover consciousness of his surroundings. "Let us hurry! I long to see that man!"

Both of them put their horses to a gallop.

"The other soldier that I spoke of," Benassis went on, "is another of those men of iron who have knocked about everywhere with our armies. His life, like that of all French soldiers, has been made up of bullets, saber strokes, and victories; he has had a very rough time of it, and has only worn the woolen epaulettes. He has a fanatical affection for Napoleon, who conferred the Cross upon him on the field of Valontina. He

is of a jovial turn of mind, and like a genuine Dauphinois, has always looked after his own interests, has his pension, and the honors of the Legion. Goguelat is his name. He was an infantry-man, who exchanged into the Guard in 1812. He is Gondrin's better half, so to speak, for the two have taken up house together. They both lodge with a peddler's widow, and make over their money to her. She is a kind soul, who boards them and looks after them and their clothes as if they were her children.

"In his quality of local postman, Goguelat carries all the news of the countryside, and a good deal of practice acquired in this way has made him an orator in great request at up-sittings, and the champion teller of stories in the district. Gondrin looks upon him as a very knowing fellow, and something of a wit; and whenever Goguelat talks about Napoleon, his comrade seems to understand what he is saying from the movement of his lips. There will be an up-sitting (as they call it) in one of my barns to-night. If these two come over to it, and we can manage to see without being seen, I shall treat you to a view of the spectacle. But here we are, close to the ditch, and I do not see my friend the pontooner."

The doctor and the commandant looked everywhere about them; Gondrin's soldier's coat lay there beside a heap of black mud, and his wheelbarrow, spade, and pick-ax were visible, but there was no sign of the man himself along the various pebbly watercourses, for the wayward mountain streams had hollowed out channels that were almost overgrown with low bushes.

"He cannot be so very far away. Gondrin! Where are you?" shouted Benassis.

Genestas first saw the curling smoke from a tobacco pipe rise among the brushwood on a bank of rubbish not far away. He pointed it out to the doctor, who shouted again. The old pontooner raised his head at this, recognized the mayor, and came towards them down a little pathway.

"Well, old friend," said Benassis, making a sort of speaking-trumpet with his hand. "Here is a comrade of yours, who was out in Egypt, come to see you."

Gondrin raised his face at once and gave Genestas a swift, keen, and searching look, one of those glances by which old soldiers are wont at once to take the measure of any impending danger. He saw the red ribbon that the commandant wore, and made a silent and respectful military salute.

"If the Little Corporal were alive," the officer cried, "you would have the Cross of the Legion of Honor and a handsome pension besides, for every man who wore epaulettes on the other side of the river owed his life to you on the 1st of October 1812. But I am not the Minister of War, my friend," the commandant added as he dismounted, and with a sudden rush of feeling he grasped the laborer's hand.

The old pontooner drew himself up at the words, he knocked the ashes from his pipe, and put it in his pocket.

"I only did my duty, sir," he said, with his head bent down; "but others have not done their duty by me. They asked for my papers! Why, the Twenty-ninth Bulletin, I told them, must do instead of my papers!"

"But you must make another appli-

cation, comrade. You are bound to have justice done you in these days, if influence is brought to bear in the right quarter."

"Justice!" cried the veteran. The doctor and the commandant shuddered at the tone in which he spoke.

In the brief pause that followed, both the horsemen looked at the man before them, who seemed like a fragment of the wreck of great armies which Napoleon had filled with men of bronze sought out from among three generations. Gondrin was certainly a splendid specimen of that seemingly indestructible mass of men which might be cut to pieces but never gave way. The old man was scarcely five feet high, wide across the shoulders, and broad-chested; his face was sunburned, furrowed with deep wrinkles, but the outlines were still firm in spite of the hollows in it, and one could see even now that it was the face of a soldier. It was a rough-hewn countenance, his forehead seemed like a block of granite; but there was a weary expression about his face, and the gray hairs hung scantily about his head, as if life were waning there already. Everything about him indicated unusual strength; his arms were covered thickly with hair, and so was the chest, which was visible through the opening of his coarse shirt. In spite of his almost crooked legs, he held himself firm and erect, as if nothing could shake him.

"Justice," he said once more; "there never will be justice for the like of us. We cannot send bailiffs to the Government to demand our dues for us; and as the wallet must be filled somehow," he said, striking his stomach, "we cannot afford to wait. Moreover, these gentry who lead snug lives in government offices may talk and talk, but their words are not good to eat, so I have come back again here to draw my pay out of the commonalty," he said, striking the mud with his spade.

"Things must not be left in that way, old comrade," said Genestas. "I owe my life to you, and it would be ungrateful of me if I did not lend you a hand. I have not forgotten the passage over the bridges in the Beresina, and it is fresh in the memories of some brave fellows of my acquaintance; they will back me up, and the nation shall give you the recognition you deserve."

"You will be called a Bonapartist! Please do not meddle in the matter, sir. I have gone to the rear now, and I have dropped into my hole here like a spent bullet. But after riding on camels through the desert, and drinking my glass by the fireside in Moscow, I never thought that I should come back to die here beneath the trees that my father planted," and he began to work again.

"Poor old man!" said Genestas, as they turned to go. "I should do the same if I were in his place; we have lost our father. Everything seems dark to me now that I have seen that man's hopelessness," he went on, addressing Benassis; "he does not know how much I am interested in him, and he will think that I am one of those gilded rascals who cannot feel for a soldier's sufferings."

He turned quickly and went back, grasped the veteran's hand, and spoke loudly in his ear—

"I swear by the Cross I wear—the Cross of Honor it used to be—that I will do all that man can do to obtain

your pension for you; even if I have to swallow a dozen refusals from the Minister, and to petition the King and the Dauphin and the whole shop!"

Old Gondrin quivered as he heard the words. He looked hard at Genestas and said, "Haven't you served in the ranks?" The commandant nodded. The pontooner wiped his hand and took that of Genestas, which he grasped warmly and said—

"I made the army a present of my life, general, when I waded out into the river yonder, and if I am still alive, it is all so much to the good. One moment! Do you care to see to the bottom of it? Well, then, ever since *somebody* was pulled down from his place, I have ceased to care about anything. And, after all," he went on more cheerfully, as he pointed to the land, "they have made over twenty thousand francs to me here, and I am taking it out in detail, as *he* used to say!"

"Well, then, comrade," said Genestas, touched by the grandeur of this forgiveness, "at least you shall have the only thing that you cannot prevent me from giving to you, here below." The commandant tapped his heart, looked once more at the old pontooner, mounted his horse again, and went his way side by side with Benassis.

"Such cruelty as this on the part of a government foments the strife between rich and poor," said the doctor. "People who exercise a little brief authority have never given a serious thought to the consequences that must follow an act of injustice done to a man of the people. It is true that a poor man who needs must work for his daily bread cannot long keep up the struggle; but he can talk, and his words find an echo in every sufferer's heart, so that one bad case of this kind is multiplied, for everyone who hears of it feels it as a personal wrong, and the leaven works. Even this is not so serious, but something far worse comes of it. Among the people, these cases of injustice bring about a chronic state of smothered hatred for their social superiors. The middle class becomes the poor man's enemy; they lie without the bounds of his moral code, he tells lies to them and robs them without scruple; indeed, theft ceases to be a crime or a misdemeanor, and is looked upon as an act of vengeance.

"When an official, who ought to see that the poor have justice done them, uses them ill and cheats them of their due, how can we expect the poor starving wretches to bear their troubles meekly and to respect the rights of property? It makes me shudder to think that some understrapper whose business it is to dust papers in a government office, has pocketed Gondrin's promised thousand francs of pension. And yet there are folk who, never having measured the excess of the people's sufferings, accuse the people of excess in the day of their vengeance! When a government has done more harm than good to individuals, its further existence depends on the merest accident, the masses square the account after their fashion by upsetting it. A statesman ought always to imagine Justice with the poor at her feet, for justice was only invented for the poor."

When they had come within the compass of the township, Benassis saw two people walking along the road in front of them, and turned to his companion,

who had been absorbed for some time in thought.

"You have seen a veteran soldier resigned to his life of wretchedness, and now you are about to see an old agricultural laborer who is submitting to the same lot. The man there ahead of us has dug and sown and toiled for others all his life."

Genestas looked and saw an old laborer making his way along the road, in company with an aged woman. He seemed to be afflicted with some form of sciatica, and limped painfully along. His feet were incased in a wretched pair of sabots, and a sort of wallet hung over his shoulder. Several tools lay in the bottom of the bag; their handles, blackened with long use and the sweat of toil, rattled audibly together; while the other end of the wallet behind his shoulder held bread, some walnuts, and a few fresh onions. His legs seemed to be warped, as it were, his back was bent by continual toil; he stooped so much as he walked that he leant on a long stick to steady himself. His snow-white hair escaped from under a battered hat, grown rusty by exposure to all sorts of weather, and mended here and there with visible stitches of white thread. His clothes, made of a kind of rough canvas, were a mass of patches of contrasting colors. This piece of humanity in ruins lacked none of the characteristics that appeal to our hearts when we see ruins of other kinds.

His wife held herself somewhat more erect. Her clothing was likewise a mass of rags, and the cap that she wore was of the coarsest materials. On her back she carried a rough earthen jar by means of a thong passed through the handles of the great pitcher, which was round in shape and flattened at the sides. They both looked up when they heard the horses approaching, saw that it was Benassis, and stopped.

The man had worked till he was almost past work, and his faithful helpmate was no less broken with toil. It was painful to see how the summer sun and the winter's cold had blackened their faces, and covered them with such deep wrinkles that their features were hardly discernible. It was not their life history that had been engraven on their faces; but it might be gathered from their attitude and bearing. Incessant toil had been the lot of both; they had worked and suffered together; they had had many troubles and few joys to share; and now, like captives grown accustomed to their prison, they seemed to be too familiar with wretchedness to heed it, and to take everything as it came. Yet a certain frank light-heartedness was not lacking in their faces; and on a closer view, their monotonous life, the lot of so many a poor creature, well-nigh seemed an enviable one. Trouble had set its unmistakable mark upon them, but petty cares had left no traces there.

"Well, my good Father Moreau, I suppose there is no help for it, and you must always be working?"

"Yes, M. Benassis, there are one or two more bits of waste that I mean to clear for you before I knock off work," the old man answered cheerfully, and a light shone in his little black eyes.

"Is that wine that your wife there is carrying? If you will not take a rest now, you ought at any rate to take wine."

"I take a rest? I should not know what to do with myself. The sun and the fresh air put life into me when I am out of doors and busy grubbing up the land. As to the wine, sir, yes, that is wine sure enough, and it is all through your contriving I know that the Mayor at Courteil lets us have it for next to nothing. Ah, you managed it very cleverly, but, all the same, I know you had a hand in it."

"Oh! come, come! Good-day, mother. You are going to work on that bit of land of Champferlu's to-day of course?"

"Yes, sir; I made a beginning there yesterday evening."

"Capital!" said Benassis. "It must be a satisfaction to you, at times, to see this hillside. You two have broken up almost the whole of the land on it yourselves."

"Lord! yes, sir," answered the old woman, "it has been our doing! We have fairly earned our bread."

"Work, you see, and land to cultivate are the poor man's consols. That good man would think himself disgraced if he went into the poorhouse or begged for his bread; he would choose to die pick-ax in hand, out in the open, in the sunlight. Faith, he bears a proud heart in him. He has worked until work has become his very life; and yet death has no terrors for him! He is a profound philosopher, little as he suspects it. Old Moreau's case suggested the idea to me of founding an almshouse for the country people of the district; a refuge for those who, after working hard all their lives, have reached an honorable old age of poverty.

"I had by no means expected to make the fortune which I have acquired here; indeed, I myself have no use for it, for a man who has fallen from the pinnacle of his hopes needs very little. It costs but little to live, the idler's life alone is a costly one, and I am not sure that the unproductive consumer is not robbing the community at large. There was some discussion about Napoleon's pension after his fall; it came to his ears, and he said that five francs a day and a horse to ride was all that he needed. I meant to have no more to do with money when I came here; but after a time I saw that money means power, and that it is in fact a necessity, if any good is to be done. So I have made arrangements in my will for turning my house into an almshouse, in which old people who have not Moreau's fierce independence can end their days. Part of the income of nine thousand francs brought in by the mill and the rest of my property will be devoted to giving outdoor relief in hard winters to those who really stand in need of it.

"This foundation will be under the control of the Municipal Council, with the addition of the curé, who is to be president; and in this way the money made in the district will be returned to it. In my will I have laid down the lines on which this institution is to be conducted; it would be tedious to go over them, it is enough to say that I have thought it all out very carefully. I have also created a trust fund, which will some day enable the commune to award several scholarships for children who show signs of promise in art or science. So, even after I am gone, my work of civilization will continue. When you have set yourself to do anything, Captain Bluteau, something within you

urges you on, you see, and you cannot bear to leave it unfinished. This craving within us for order and for perfection is one of the signs that point most surely to a future existence. Now, let us quicken our pace, I have my round to finish, and there are five or six more patients still to be visited."

They cantered on for some time in silence, till Benassis said laughingly to his companion, "Come now, Captain Bluteau, you have drawn me out and made me chatter like a magpie, and you have not said a syllable about your own history, which must be an interesting one. When a soldier has come to your time of life, he has seen so much that he must have more than one adventure to tell about."

"Why, my history has been simply the history of the army," answered Genestas. "Soldiers are all after one pattern. Never in command, always giving and taking saber-cuts in my place, I have lived just like everybody else. I have been wherever Napoleon led us, and have borne a part in every battle in which the Imperial Guard has struck a blow; but everybody knows all about these events. A soldier has to look after his horse, to endure hunger and thrist at times, to fight whenever there is fighting to be done, and there you have the whole history of his life. As simple as saying good-day, is it not? Then there are battles in which your horse casts a shoe at the outset, and lands you in a quandary; and as far as you are concerned, that is the whole of it. In short, I have seen so many countries, that seeing them has come to be a matter of course; and I have seen so many men die, that I have come to value my own life at nothing."

"But you yourself must have been in danger at times, and it would be interesting to hear you tell of your personal adventures."

"Perhaps," answered the commandant.

"Well, then, tell me about the adventures that made the deepest impression upon you. Come! do not hesitate. I shall not think that you are wanting in modesty even if you should tell me of some piece of heroism on your part; and when a man is quite sure that he will not be misunderstood, ought he not to find a kind of pleasure in saying, 'I did thus'?"

"Very well, then, I will tell you about something that gives me a pang of remorse from time to time. During fifteen years of warfare it never once happened that I killed a man, save in legitimate defense of self. We are drawn up in line, and we charge; and if we do not strike down those before us, they will begin to draw blood without asking leave, so you have to kill if you do not mean to be killed, and your conscience is quite easy. But once I broke a comrade's back; it happened in a singular way, and it has been a painful thing to me to think of afterwards—the man's dying grimace haunts me at times. But you shall judge for yourself.

"It was during the retreat from Moscow," the commandant went on. "The Grand Army had ceased to be itself; we were more like a herd of overdriven cattle. Good-bye to discipline! The regiments had lost sight of their colors, everyone was his own master, and the Emperor (one need not scruple to say

it) knew that it was useless to attempt to exert his authority when things had gone so far. When we reached Studzianka, a little place on the other side of the Beresina, we came upon human dwellings for the first time after several days. There were barns and peasants' cabins to destroy, and pits full of potatoes and beetroot; the army had been without victual, and now it fairly ran riot, the first comers, as you might expect, making a clean sweep of everything.

"I was one of the last to come up. Luckily for me, sleep was the one thing that I longed for just then. I caught sight of a barn and went into it. I looked round and saw a score of generals and officers of high rank, all of them men who, without flattery, might be called great. Junot was there, and Narbonne, the Emperor's aid-de-camp, and all the chiefs of the army. There were common soldiers there as well, not one of whom would have given up his bed of straw to a marshal of France. Some who were leaning their backs against the wall had dropped off to sleep where they stood, because there was no room to lie down; others lay stretched out on the floor—it was a mass of men packed together so closely for the sake of warmth, that I looked about in vain for a nook to lie down in. I walked over this flooring of human bodies; some of the men growled, the others said nothing, but no one budged. They would not have moved out of the way of a cannon ball just then; but under the circumstances, one was not obliged to practice the maxims laid down by the Child's Guide to Manners. Groping about, I saw at the end of the barn a sort of ledge up above in the roof; no one had felt equal to the effort. I clambered up and ensconced myself upon it; and as I lay there at full length, I looked down at the men huddled together like sheep below. It was a pitiful sight, yet it almost made me laugh. A man here and there was gnawing a frozen carrot, with a kind of animal satisfaction expressed in his face; and thunderous snores came from generals who lay muffled up in ragged cloaks. The whole barn was lighted by a blazing pine log; it might have set the place on fire, and no one would have troubled to get up and put it out.

"I lay down on my back, and, naturally, just before I dropped off, my eyes traveled to the roof above me, and then I saw that the main beam which bore the weight of the joists was being slightly shaken from east to west. The blessed thing danced about in fine style. 'Gentlemen,' said I, 'one of our friends outside has a mind to warm himself at our expense.' A few moments more and the beam was sure to come down. 'Gentlemen! gentlemen!' I shouted, 'we shall all be killed in a minute! Look at the beam there!' and I made such a noise that my bedfellows awoke at last. Well, sir, they all stared up at the beam, and then went off to sleep again, while those who were eating did not even stop to answer me.

"Seeing how things were, there was nothing for it but to get up and leave my place, and run the risk of finding it taken by somebody else, for all the lives of this heap of heroes were at stake. So out I go. I turn the corner of the barn and come upon a great devil of a Würtemberger, who was tugging at the

beam with a certain enthusiasm. 'Aho! aho!' I shouted, trying to make him understand that he must desist from his toil. *'Gehe mir aus dem Gesicht, oder ich schlag dich todt!*—Get out of my sight, or I will kill you,' he cried. 'Ah! yes, just so, *Qué mire aous dem guesit,*' I answered; 'but that is not the point.' I picked up his gun that he had left on the ground, and broke his back with it; then I turned in again, and went off to sleep. Now you know the whole business."

"But that was a case of self-defense, in which one man suffered for the good of many, so you have nothing to reproach yourself with," said Benassis.

The Story

"Shall we go to the barn?" said the doctor, laying a hand on Genestas's arm. They had taken leave of the curé and the other guests. "You will hear them talking about Napoleon, Captain Bluteau. Goguelat, the postman, is there, and there are several of his cronies who are sure to draw him out on the subject of the idol of the people. Nicolle, my stableman, has set a ladder so that we can climb up on to the hay; there is a place from which we can look down on the whole scene. Come along, an upsitting is something worth seeing, believe me. It will not be the first time that I have hidden in the hay to overhear a soldier's tales or the stories that peasants tell among themselves. We must be careful to keep out of sight though, as these good folk turn shy and put on company manners as soon as they see a stranger."

"Eh! my dear sir," said Genestas. "have I not often pretended to be asleep so as to hear my troopers talking out on bivouac? My word, I once heard a droll yarn reeled off by an old quartermaster for some conscripts who were afraid of war; I never laughed so heartily in any theater in Paris. He was telling them about the Retreat from Moscow, he told them that the army had nothing but the clothes they stood up in, that their wine was iced, that the dead stood stock-still in the road just where they were, that they had seen White Russia, and that they currycombed the horses there with their teeth, that those who were fond of skating had fine times of it, and people who had a fancy for savory ices had as much as they could put away, that the women were generally poor company, but that the only thing they could really complain of was the want of hot water for shaving. In fact, he told them such a pack of absurdities, that even an old quartermaster who had lost his nose with a frostbite, so that they had dubbed him *Nezrestant,* was fain to laugh."

"Hush!" said Benassis, "here we are. I will go first; follow after me."

Both of them scaled the ladder and hid themselves in the hay, in a place from whence they could have a good view of the party below, who had not heard a sound overhead. Little groups of women were clustered about three or four candles. Some of them sewed, others were spinning, a good few of them were doing nothing, and sat with their heads strained forward, and their eyes fixed on an old peasant who was telling a story. The men were standing about for the most part, or lying at full length on the trusses of hay. Every group

was absolutely silent. Their faces were barely visible by the flickering gleams of the candles by which the women were working, although each candle was surrounded by a glass globe filled with water, in order to concentrate the light. The thick darkness and shadow that filled the roof and all the upper part of the barn seemed still further to diminish the light that fell here and there upon the workers' heads with such picturesque effects of light and shade. Here, it shone full upon the bright wondering eyes and brown forehead of a little peasant maiden; and there the straggling beams brought out the outlines of the rugged brows of some of the older men, throwing up their figures in sharp relief against the dark background, and giving a fantastic appearance to their worn and weather-stained garb. The attentive attitude of all these people and the expression on all their faces showed that they had given themselves up entirely to the pleasure of listening, and that the narrator's sway was absolute. It was a curious scene. The immense influence that poetry exerts over every mind was plainly to be seen. For is not the peasant who demands that the tale of wonder should be simple, and that the impossible should be well-nigh credible, a lover of poetry of the purest kind?

"She did not like the look of the house at all," the peasant was saying as the two newcomers took their places where they could overhear him; "but the poor little hunchback was so tired out with carrying her bundle of hemp to market, that she went in; besides, the night had come, and she could go no further. She only asked to be allowed to sleep there, and ate nothing but a crust of bread that she took from her wallet. And inasmuch as the woman who kept house for the brigands knew nothing about what they had planned to do that night, she let the old woman into the house, and sent her upstairs without a light. Our hunchback throws herself down on a rickety truckle bed, says her prayers, thinks about her hemp, and is dropping off to sleep. But before she is fairly asleep, she hears a noise, and in walk two men carrying a lantern, and each man had a knife in his hand. Then fear came upon her; for in those times, look you, they used to make *pâtés* of human flesh for the seigneurs, who were very fond of them. But the old woman plucked up heart again, for she was so thoroughly shriveled and wrinkled that she thought they would think her a poorish sort of diet. The two men went past the hunchback and walked up to a bed that there was in the great room, and in which they had put the gentleman with the big portmanteau, the one that passed for a *negromancer*. The taller man holds up the lantern and takes the gentleman by the feet, and the short one, that had pretended to be drunk, clutches hold of his head and cuts his throat, clean, with one stroke, swish! Then they leave the head and body lying in its own blood up there, steal the portmanteau, and go downstairs with it. Here is our woman in a nice fix! First of all she thinks of slipping out, before anyone can suspect it, not knowing that Providence had brought her there to glorify God and to bring down punishment on the murderers. She was in a great fright, and when one is frightened one thinks of

nothing else. But the woman of the house had asked the two brigands about the hunchback, and that had alarmed them. So back they come, creeping softly up the wooden staircase. The poor hunchback curls up in a ball with fright, and she hears them talking about her in whispers.

"'Kill her, I tell you.'

"'No need to kill her.'

"'Kill her!'

"'No!'

"Then they come in. The woman, who was no fool, shuts her eyes and pretends to be asleep. She sets to work to sleep like a child, with her hand on her heart, and takes to breathing like a cherub. The man opens the lantern and shines the light straight into the eyes of the sleeping old woman—she does not move an eyelash, she is in such a terror for her neck.

"'She is sleeping like a log; you can see that quite well,' so says the tall one.

"'Old women are so cunning!' answers the short man. 'I will kill her. We shall feel easier in our minds. Besides, we will salt her down to feed the pigs.'

"The old woman hears all this talk, but she does not stir.

"'Oh! it is all right, she is asleep,' says the short ruffian, when he saw that the hunchback had not stirred.

"That is how the old woman saved her life. And she may be fairly called courageous; for it is a fact that there are not many girls here who could have breathed like cherubs while they heard that talk going on about the pigs. Well, the two brigands set to work to lift up the dead man; they wrap him round in the sheets and chuck him out into the little yard; and the old woman hears the pigs scampering up to eat him, and grunting, *Hon! hon!*

"So when morning comes," the narrator resumed after a pause, "the woman gets up and goes down, paying a couple of sous for her bed. She takes up her wallet, goes on just as if nothing had happened, asks for the news of the countryside, and gets away in peace. She wants to run. Running is quite out of the question, her legs fail her for fright; and lucky it was for her that she could not run, for this reason. She had barely gone half a quarter of a league before she sees one of the brigands coming after her, just out of craftiness to make quite sure that she had seen nothing. She guesses this, and sits herself down on a bowlder.

"'What is the matter, good woman?' asks the short one, for it was the shorter one and the wickeder of the two who was dogging her.

"'Oh! master,' says she, 'my wallet is so heavy, and I am so tired, that I badly want some good man to give me his arm' (sly thing, only listen to her!) 'if I am to get back to my poor home.'

"Thereupon the brigand offers to go along with her, and she accepts his offer. The fellow takes hold of her arm to see if she is afraid. Not she! She does not tremble a bit, and walks quietly along. So there they are, chatting away as nicely as possible, all about farming, and the way to grow hemp, till they come to the outskirts of the town, where the hunchback lived, and the brigand made off for fear of meeting some of the sheriff's people. The woman reached her house at midday, and waited there till her husband came home; she thought and thought over all that had happened

on her journey and during the night. The hemp-grower came home in the evening. He was hungry; something must be got ready for him to eat. So while she greases her frying-pan, and gets ready to fry something for him, she tells him how she sold her hemp, and gabbles away as females do, but not a word does she say about the pigs, nor about the gentleman who was murdered and robbed and eaten. She holds her frying-pan in the flames so as to clean it, draws it out again to give it a wipe, and finds it full of blood.

"'What have you been putting into it?' says she to her man.

"'Nothing,' says he.

"She thinks it must have been a nonsensical piece of woman's fancy, and puts her frying-pan into the fire again. . . . *Pouf!* A head comes tumbling down the chimney!

"'Oh! look! It is nothing more nor less than the dead man's head,' says the old woman. 'How he stares at me! What does he want!'

"'*You must avenge me!*' says a voice.

"'What an idiot you are!' said the hemp-grower. 'Always seeing something or other that has no sort of sense about it! Just you all over.'

"He takes up the head, which snaps at his finger, and pitches it out into the yard.

"'Get on with my omelette,' he says, 'and do not bother yourself about that. 'Tis a cat.'

"'A cat!' says she; 'it was as round as a ball.'

"She puts back her frying-pan on the fire. . . . *Pouf!* Down comes a leg this time, and they go through the whole story again. The man was no more astonished at the foot than he had been at the head; he snatched up the leg and threw it out at the door. Before they had finished, the other leg, both arms, the body, the whole murdered traveler, in fact, came down piecemeal. No omelette all this time! The old hempseller grew very hungry indeed.

"'By my salvation!' said he, 'when once my omelette is made we will see about satisfying that man yonder.'

"'So you admit, now, that it was a man?' said the hunchback wife. 'What made you say it was not a head a minute ago, you great worry?'

"The woman breaks the eggs, fries the omelette, and dishes it up without any more grumbling; somehow this squabble began to make her feel very uncomfortable. Her husband sits down and begins to eat. The hunchback was frightened, and said that she was not hungry.

"'Tap! tap!' There was a stranger rapping at the door.

"'Who is there?'

"'The man that died yesterday!'

"'Come in,' answers the hemp-grower.

"So the traveler comes in, sits himself down on a three-legged stool, and says: 'Are you mindful of God, who gives eternal peace to those who confess His Name? Woman! You saw me done to death, and you have said nothing! I have been eaten by the pigs! The pigs do not enter Paradise, and therefore I, a Christian man, shall go down into hell, all because a woman forsooth will not speak, a thing that has never been known before. You must deliver me,' and so on, and so on.

"The woman, who was more and more frightened every minute, cleaned her frying-pan, put on her Sunday clothes,

went to the justice, and told him about the crime, which was brought to light, and the robbers were broken on the wheel in proper style on the Market Place. This good work accomplished, the woman and her husband always had the finest hemp you ever set eyes on. Then, which pleased them still better, they had something that they had wished for for a long time, to wit, a man child, who in course of time became a great lord of the king's.

"That is the true story of *The Courageous Hunchback Woman.*"

"I do not like stories of that sort; they make me dream at night," said La Fosseuse. "Napoleon's adventures are much nicer, I think."

"Quite true," said the keeper. "Come now, M. Goguelat, tell us about the Emperor."

"The evening is too far gone," said the postman, "and I do not care about cutting short the story of a victory."

"Never mind, let us hear about it all the same! We know the stories, for we have heard you tell them many a time; but it is always a pleasure to hear them."

"Tell us about the Emperor!" cried several voices at once.

"You will have it?" answered Goguelat. "Very good, but you will see that there is no sense in the story when it is gone through at a gallop. I would rather tell you all about a single battle. Shall it be Champ-Aubert, where we ran out of cartridges, and furbished them just the same with the bayonet?"

"No, the Emperor! the Emperor!"

The old infantryman got up from his truss of hay and glanced around about on those assembled, with the peculiar somber expression in which may be read all the miseries, adventures, and hardships of an old soldier's career. He took his coat by the two skirts in front, and raised them, as if it were a question of once more packing up the knapsack in which his kit, his shoes, and all he had in the world used to be stowed; for a moment he stood leaning all his weight on his left foot, then he swung the right foot forward, and yielded with a good grace to the wishes of his audience. He swept his gray hair to one side, so as to leave his forehead bare, and flung back his head and gazed upwards, as if to raise himself to the lofty height of the gigantic story that he was about to tell.

"Napoleon, you see, my friends, was born in Corsica, which is a French island warmed by the Italian sun; it is like a furnace there, everything is scorched up, and they keep on killing each other from father to son for generations all about nothing at all—'tis a notion they have. To begin at the beginning, there was something extraordinary about the thing from the first; it occurred to his mother, who was the handsomest woman of her time, and a shrewd soul, to dedicate him to God, so that he should escape all the dangers of infancy and of his after life; for she had dreamed that the world was on fire on the day he was born. It was a prophecy! So she asked God to protect him, on condition that Napoleon should re-establish His holy religion, which had been thrown to the ground just then. That was the agreement; we shall see what came of it.

"Now, do you follow me carefully, and tell me whether what you are about to hear is natural.

"It is certain sure that only a man who had had imagination enough to

make a mysterious compact would be capable of going further than anybody else, and of passing through volleys of grapeshot and showers of bullets which carried us off like flies, but which had a respect for his head. I myself had particular proof of that at Eylau. I see him yet; he climbs a hillock, takes his field-glass, looks along our lines, and says, 'That is going on all right.' One of your deep fellows, with a bunch of feathers in his cap, used to plague him a good deal from all accounts, following him about everywhere, even when he was getting his meals. This fellow wants to do something clever so as soon as the Emperor goes away he takes his place. Oh! swept away in a moment! And that is the last of the bunch of feathers! You understand quite clearly that Napoleon had undertaken to keep his secret to himself. That is why those who accompanied him, and even his especial friends, used to drop like nuts: Duroc, Bessiéres, Lannes—men as strong as bars of steel, which he cast into shape for his own ends. And here is a final proof that he was the child of God, created to be the soldier's father; for no one ever saw him as a lieutenant or a captain. He is a commandant straight off! Ah! yes, indeed! He did not look more than four-and-twenty, but he was an old general ever since the taking of Toulon, when he made a beginning by showing the rest that they knew nothing about handling cannon. Next thing he does, he tumbles upon us. A little slip of a general-in-chief of the army of Italy, which had neither bread nor ammunition nor shoes nor clothes—a wretched army as naked as a worm.

"'Friends,' he said, 'here we all are together. Now, get it well into your pates that in a fortnight's time from now you will be the victors, and dressed in new clothes; you shall all have great-coats, strong gaiters, and famous pairs of shoes; but, my children, you will have to march on Milan to take them, where all these things are.'

"So they marched. The French, crushed as flat as a pancake held up their heads again. There were thirty thousands of us tatterdemalions against eighty thousand swaggerers of Germans —fine tall men and well equipped; I can see them yet. Then Napoleon, who was only Bonaparte in those days, breathed goodness knows what into us, and on we marched night and day. We rap their knuckles at Montenotte; we hurry on to thrash them at Rivoli, Lodi, Arcola, and Millesimo, and we never let them go. The army came to have a liking for winning battles. Then Napoleon hems them in on all sides, these German generals did not know where to hide themselves so as to have a little peace and comfort; he drubs them suondly, cribs ten thousand of their men at a time by surrounding them with fifteen hundred Frenchmen, whom he makes to spring up after his fashion, and at last he takes their cannon, victuals, money, ammunition, and everything they have that is worth taking; he pitches them into the water, beats them on the mountains, snaps at them in the air, gobbles them up on the earth, and thrashes them everywhere.

"There are the troops in full feather again! For, look you, the Emperor (who, for that matter, was a wit) soon sent for the inhabitant, and told him that he had come there to deliver him.

Whereupon the civilian finds us free quarters and makes much of us, so do the women, who showed great discernment. To come to a final end; in Ventose '96, which was at that time what the month of March is now, we had been driven up into a corner of the Pays des Marmottes; but after the campaign, lo and behold! we were the masters of Italy, just as Napoleon had prophesied. And in the month of March following, in one year and in two campaigns, he brings us within sight of Vienna; we had made a clean sweep of them. We had gobbled down three armies one after another, and taken the conceit out of four Austrian generals; one of them, an old man who had white hair, had been roasted like a rat in the straw before Mantua. The kings were suing for mercy on their knees. Peace had been won. Could a mere mortal have done that? No. God helped him, that is certain. He distributed himself about like the five loaves in the Gospel, commanded on the battlefield all day, and drew up his plans at night. The sentries always saw him coming and going; he neither ate nor slept. Therefore, recognizing these prodigies, the soldier adopts him for his father. But, forward!

"The other folk there in Paris, seeing all this, say among themselves—

" 'Here is a pilgrim who appears to take his instruction from Heaven above; he is uncommonly likely to lay a hand on France. We must let him loose on Asia or America, and that, perhaps, will keep him quite.'

"The same thing was decreed for him as for Jesus Christ; for, as a matter of fact, they give him orders to go on duty down in Egypt. See his resemblance to the Son of God! That is not all, though. He calls all his fire-eaters about him, all those into whom he had more particularly put the Devil, and talks to them in this way—

" 'My friends, for the time being they are giving us Egypt to stop our mouths. But we will swallow down Egypt in a brace of shakes, just as we swallowed Italy, and private soldiers shall be princes, and shall have broad lands of their own. Forward!'

" 'Forward, lads!' cry the sergeants.

"So we come to Toulon on the way to Egypt. Whereupon the English put to sea with all their fleet. But when we are on board, Napoleon says to us—

" 'They will not see us: and it is right and proper that you should know henceforward that your general has a star in the sky that guides us and watches over us!'

"So said, so done. As we sailed over the sea we took Malta, by way of an orange to quench his thirst for victory, for he was a man who must always be doing something. There we are in Egypt. Well and good. Different orders. The Egyptians, like you, are men who, ever since the world has been the world, have been in the habit of having giants to reign over them, and armies like swarms of ants; because it is a country full of genii and crocodiles, where they have built up pyramids as big as our mountains, the fancy took them to stow their kings under the pyramids, so as to keep them fresh, a thing which mightily pleases them all round out there. Whereupon, as wes landed, the Little Corporal said to us—

" 'My children, the country which you are about to conquer worships a lot of

idols which you must respect, because the Frenchman ought to be on good terms with all the world, and fight people without giving annoyance. Get it well into your heads to let everything alone at first; for we shall have it all by and by! And forward!'

"So far so good. But all those people had heard a prophecy of Napoleon, under the name of *Kebir Bonaberdis,* a word which in their lingo means, 'The sultan fires a shot,' and they feared him like the Devil. So the Grand Turk, Asia, and Africa have recourse to magic, and they send a demon against us, named the Madhi, who it was thought had come down from heaven on a white charger which, like its master, was bullet-proof, and the pair of them lived on the air of that part of the world. There are people who have seen them, but for my part I cannot give you any certain information about them. They were the divinities of Arabia and of the Mamelukes, who wished their troopers to believe that the Mahdi had the power of preventing them from dying in battle. They gave out that he was an angel sent down to wage war on Napoleon, and to get back Solomon's Seal, part of their paraphernalia which they pretended our general had stolen. You will readily understand that we made them cry *peccavi* all the same.

"Ah, just tell me now how they came to know about that compact of Napoleon's? Was that natural?

"They took it into their heads for certain that he commanded the genii, and that he went from place to place like a bird in the twinkling of an eye; and it is a fact that he was everywhere. At length it came about that he carried off a queen of theirs. She was the private property of a Mameluke, who, although he had several more of them, flatly refused to strike a bargain, though 'the other' offered all his treasures for her and diamonds as big as pigeon's eggs. When things had come to that pass, they could not well be settled without a good deal of fighting; and there was fighting enough for everybody and no mistake about it.

"Then we are drawn up before Alexandria, and again at Gizeh, and before the Pyramids. We had to march over the sands and in the sun; people whose eyes dazzled used to see water that they could not drink and shade that made them fume. But we made short work of the Mamelukes as usual, and everything goes down before the voice of Napoleon, who seizes Upper and Lower Egypt and Arabia, far and wide, till we came to the capitals of kingdoms which no longer existed, where there were thousands and thousands of statues of all the devils in creation, all done to the life, and another curious thing too, any quantity of lizards. A confounded country where anyone could have as many acres of land as he wished for as little as he pleased.

"While he was busy inland, where he meant to carry out some wonderful ideas of his, the English burn his fleet for him in Aboukir Bay, for they never could do enough to annoy us. But Napoleon, who was respected East and West, and called 'My Son' by the Pope, and 'My dear Father' by Mahomet's cousin, makes up his mind to have his revenge on England, and to take India in exchange for his fleet. He set out to lead us into Asia, by way of the Red Sea, through a country where there were palaces for

halting-places, and nothing but gold and diamonds to pay the troops with, when the Mahdi comes to an understanding with the Plague, and sends it among us to make a break in our victories. Halt! Then every man files off to that parade from which no one comes back on his two feet. The dying soldier cannot take Acre, into which he forces an entrance three times with a warrior's impetuous enthusiasm; the Plague was too strong for us; there was not even time say 'Your servant, sir!' to the Plague. Every man was down with it. Napoleon alone was as fresh as a rose; the whole army saw him drinking in the Plague without it doing him any harm whatever.

"There now, my friends, was that natural, do you think?

"The Mamelukes, knowing that we were all on the sick list, want to stop our road; but it was no use trying that nonsense with Napoleon. So he spoke to his familiars, who had tougher skins than the rest—

"'Go and clear the road for me.'

"Junot, who was his devoted friend, and a first-class fighter, only takes a thousand men, and makes a clean sweep of the Pacha's army, which had the impudence to bar our way. Thereupon back we come to Cairo, our headquarters, and now for another story.

"Napoleon being out of the country, France allowed the people in Paris to worry the life out of her. They kept back the soldier's pay and all their linen and clothing, left them to starve, and expected them to lay down law to the universe, without taking any further trouble in the matter. They were idiots of the kind that amuse themselves with chattering instead of setting themselves to knead the dough. So our armies were defeated, France could not keep her frontiers; The Man was not there. I say The Man, look you, because that was how they called him; but it was stuff and nonsense, for he had a star of his own and all his other peculiarities, it was the rest of us that were mere men. He hears this history of France after his famous battle of Aboukir, where with a single division he routed the grand army of the Turks, twenty-five thousand strong, and jostled more than half of them into the sea, rrrah! without losing more than three hundred of his own men. That was his last thunder-clap in Egypt. He said to himself, seeing that all was lost down there, 'I know that I am the saviour of France, and to France I must go.'

"But you must clearly understand that the army did not know of his departure; for if they had, they would have kept him there by force to make him Emperor of the East. So there we all are without him, and in low spirits, for he was the life of us. He leaves Kléber in command, a great watchdog who passed in his checks at Cairo, murdered by an Egyptian whom they put to death by spiking him with a bayonet, which is their way of guillotining people out there; but he suffered so much, that a soldier took pity on the scoundrel and handed his flask to him; and the Egyptian turned up his eyes then and there with all the pleasure in life. But there is not much fun for us about this little affair. Napoleon steps aboard of a little cockle-shell, a mere nothing of a skiff, called the *Fortune*, and in the twinkling of an eye, and in the teeth of the English, who were blockading the place

with vessels of the line and cruisers and everything that carries canvas, he lands in France, for he always had the faculty of taking the sea at a stride. Was that natural? Bah! as soon as he is landed at Fréjus, it is as good as saying that he has set foot in Paris. Everybody there worships him; but he calls the Government together.

"'What have you done to my children, the soldiers?' he says to the lawyers. 'You are a set of good-for-nothings who make fools of other people, and feather your own nests at the expense of France. It will not do. I speak in the name of everyone who is discontented.'

"Thereupon they want to put him off and to get rid of him; but not a bit of it! He locks them up in the barracks where they used to argufy and makes them jump out of the windows. Then he makes them fellow in his train, and they all become as mute as fishes and supple as tobacco pouches. So he becomes Consul at a blow. He was not the man to doubt the existence of the Supreme Being; he kept his word with Providence, who had kept His promise in earnest; he sets up religion again, and gives back the churches, and they ring the bells for God and Napoleon. So everyone is satisfied: *primo,* the priests with whom he allows no one to meddle; *segondo,* the merchant folk who carry on their trades without fear of the *rapiamus* of the law that had pressed too heavily on them; *tertio,* the nobles; for the people had fallen into an unfortunate habit of putting them to death, and he puts a stop to this.

"But there were enemies to be cleared out of the way, and he was not the one to go to sleep after mess; and his eyes, look you, traveled all over the world as if it had been a man's face. The next thing he did was to turn up in Italy; it was just as if he had put his head out of the window and the sight of him was enough; they gulp down the Austrians at Marengo like a whale swallowing gudgeons! *Haouf!* The French Victories blew their trumphets so loud that the whole world could hear the noise, and there was an end of it.

"'We will not keep on at this game any longer!' say the Germans.

"'That is enough of this sort of thing,' say the others.

"Here is the upshot. Europe shows the white feather, England knuckles under, general peace all round, and kings and peoples pretending to embrace each other. While then and there the Emperor hits on the idea of the Legion of Honor, there's a fine thing if you like!

"He spoke to the whole army at Boulogne. In France,' so he said, 'every man is brave. So the civilian who does gloriously shall be the soldier's sister, the soldier shall be his brother, and both shall stand together beneath the flag of honor.'

"By the time that the rest of us who were away down there in Egypt had come back again, everything was changed. We had seen him last as a general, and in no time we find that he is Emperor! And when this was settled (and it may safely be said that everyone was satisfied) there was a holy ceremony such as never was seen under the canopy of heaven. Faith, France gave herself to him, like a handsome girl to a lancer, and the Pope and all his cardinals in

robes of red and gold come across the Alps on purpose to anoint him before the army and the people, who clap their hands.

"There is one thing that it would be very wrong to keep back from you. While he was in Egypt, in the desert not far away from Syria, *the Red Man* had appeared to him on the mountain of Moses, in order to say, 'Everything is going on well.' Then again, on the eve of the victory of Marengo, the Red Man springs to his feet in front of the Emperor for the second time, and says to him—

" 'You shall see the world at your feet; you shall be Emperor of the French, King of Italy, master of Holland, ruler of Spain, Portugal, and the Illyrian Provinces, protector of Germany, saviour of Poland, first eagle of the Legion of Honor, and all the rest of it.'

"That Red Man, look you, was a notion of his own, who ran on errands and carried messages, so many people say, between him and his star. I myself have never believed that; but the Red Man is, undoubtedly, a fact. Napoleon himself spoke of the Red Man who lived up in the roof of the Tuileries, and who used to come to him, he said, in moments of trouble and difficulty. So on the night after his coronation Napoleon saw him for the third time, and they talked over a lot of thing together.

"Then the Emperor goes straight to Milan to have himself crowned King of Italy, and then came the real triumph of the soldier. For everyone who could write became an officer forthwith, and pensions and gifts of duchies poured down in showers. There were fortunes for the staff that never cost France a penny, and the Legion of Honor was as good as an annuity for the rank and file; I still draw my pension on the strength of it. In short, here were armies provided for in a way that had never been seen before! But the Emperor, who knew that he was to be Emperor over everybody, and not only over the army, bethinks himself of the bourgeois, and sets them to build fairy monuments in places that had been as bare as the back of my hand till then. Suppose, now, that you are coming out of Spain and on the way to Berlin; well, you would see triumphal arches, and in the sculpture upon them the common soldiers are done every bit as beautifully as the generals!

"In two or three years Napoleon fills his cellars with gold, makes bridges, palaces, roads, scholars, festivals, laws, fleets, and harbors; he spends millions on millions, ever so much, and ever so much more to it, so that I have heard it said that he could have paved the whole of France with five-franc pieces if the fancy had taken him; and all this without putting any taxes on you people here. So when he was comfortably seated on his throne, and so thoroughly the master of the situation, that all Europe was waiting for leave to do anything for him that he might happen to want; as he had four brothers and three sisters, he said to us, just as it might be by way of conversation, in the order of the day—

" 'Children, is it fitting that your Emperor's relations should beg their bread? No; I want them all to be luminaries, like me in fact! Therefore, it is urgently necessary to conquer a kingdom for each of them, so that the French nation may be masters everywhere, so that the

Guard may make the whole earth tremble, and France may spit wherever she likes, and every nation shall say to her, as it is written on my coins, "God protects you!"'

"'All right!' answers the army; 'we will fish up kingdoms for you with the bayonet.'

"Ah! there was no backing out of it, look you! If he had taken it into his head to conquer the moon, we should have had to put everything in train, pack our knapsacks, and scramble up; luckily, he had no wish for that excursion. The kings who were used to the comforts of a throne, of course, objected to be lugged off, so we had marching orders. We march, we get there, and the earth begins to shake to its center again. What times they were for wearing out men and shoe-leather! And the hard knocks that they gave us! Only Frenchmen could have stood it. But you are not ignorant that a Frenchman is a born philosopher; he knows that he must die a little sooner or a little later. So we used to die without a word, because we had the pleasure of watching the Emperor do *this* on the maps."

Here the soldier swung quickly round on one foot, so as to trace a circle on the barn floor with the other.

"'There, that shall be a kingdom,' he used to say, and it was a kingdom. What fine times they were! Colonels became generals whilst you were looking at them, generals became marshals of France, and marshals became kings. There is one of them still left on his feet to keep Europe in mind of those days, Gascon though he may be, and a traitor to France that he might keep his crown; and he did not blush for his shame, for, after all, a crown, look you, is made of gold. The very sappers and miners who knew how to read became great nobles in the same way. And I who am telling you all this have seen in Paris eleven kings and a crowd of princes all round about Napoleon, like rays about the sun! Keep this well in your minds, that as every soldier stood a chance of having a throne of his own (provided he showed himself worthy of it), a corporal of the Guard was by way of being a sight to see, and they gaped at him as he went by; for everyone came by his share after a victory, it was made perfectly clear in the bulletin. And what battles they were! Austerlitz, where the army was maneuvered as if it had been a review; Eylau, where the Russians were drowned in a lake, just as if Napoleon had breathed on them and blown them in; Wagram, where the fighting was kept up for three whole days without flinching. In short, there were as many battles as there are saints in the calendar.

"Then it was made clear beyond a doubt that Napoleon bore the Sword of God in his scabbard. He had a regard for the soldier. He took the soldier for his child. He was anxious that you should have shoes, shirts, greatcoats, bread, and cartridges; but he kept up his majesty, too, for reigning was his own particular occupation. But, all the same, a sergeant, or even a common soldier, could go up to him and call him 'Emperor,' just as you might say 'My good friend' to me at times. And he would give an answer to anything you put before him. He used to sleep on the snow just like the rest of us—in short, he looked almost like an ordinary man; but I who am telling you all these things

have seen him myself with the grapeshot whizzing about his ears, no more put out by it than you are at this moment; never moving a limb, watching through his field-glass, always looking after his business; so we stood our ground likewise, as cool and calm as John the Baptist. I do not know how he did it; but whenever he spoke, a something in his words made our hearts burn within us; and just to let him see that we were his children, and that it was not in us to shirk or flinch, we used to walk just as usual right up to the sluts of cannon that were belching smoke and vomiting battalions of balls, and never a man would so much as say, 'Look out!' It was a something that made dying men raise their heads to salute him and cry, 'Long live the Emperor!'

"Was that natural? Would you have done this for a mere man?

"Thereupon, having fitted up all his family, and things having so turned out that the Empress Josephine (a good woman for all that) had no children, he was obliged to part company with her, although he loved her not a little. But he must have children, for reasons of State. All the crowned heads of Europe, when they heard of his difficulty, squabbled among themselves as to who should find him a wife. He married an Austrian princess, so they say, who was the daughter of the Cæsars, a man of antiquity whom everybody talks about, not only in our country, where it is said that most things were his doing, but also all over Europe. And so certain sure is that, that I who am talking to you have been myself across the Danube, where I saw the ruins of a bridge built by that man; and it appeared that he was some connection of Napoleon's at Rome, for the Emperor claimed succession there for his son.

"So, after his wedding, which was a holiday for the whole world, and when they let the people off their taxes for ten years to come (though they had to pay them just the same after all, because the excisemen took no notice of the proclamation)—after his wedding, I say, his wife had a child who was King of Rome; a child was born a King while his father was alive, a thing that had never been seen in the world before! That day a balloon set out from Paris to carry the news to Rome, and went all the way in one day. There, now! Is there one of you who will stand me out that there was nothing supernatural in that? No, it was decreed on high. And the mischief take those who will not allow that it was wafted over by God Himself, so as to add to the honor and glory of France!

"But there was the Emperor of Russia, a friend of our Emperor's, who was put out because he had not married a Russian lady. So the Russian backs up our enemies the English; for there had always been something to prevent Napoleon from putting a spoke in their wheel. Clearly an end must be made of fowl of that feather. Napoleon is vexed, and he says to us—

" 'Soldiers! You have been the masters of every capital in Europe, except Moscow, which is allied to England. So, in order to conquer London and India, which belongs to them in London, I find it absolutely necessary that we go to Moscow.'

"Thereupon the greatest army that

ever wore gaiters, and left its footprints all over the globe, is brought together, and drawn up with such peculiar cleverness, that the Emperor passed a million of men in review, all in a single day.

"'Hourra!' cry the Russians, and there is all Russia assembled, a lot of brutes of Cossacks that you never can come up with! It was country against country, a general stramash; we had to look out for ourselves. 'It was all Asia against Europe,' as the Red Man had said to Napoleon. 'All right,' Napoleon had answered, 'I shall be ready for them.'

"And there, in fact, were all the kings who came to lick Napoleon's hand. Austria, Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, Poland, and Italy, all speaking us fair and going along with us; it was a fine thing! The Eagles had never cooed before as they did on parade in those days, when they were reared above all the flags of all the nations of Europe. The Poles could not contain their joy because the Emperor had a notion of setting up their kingdom again; and ever since Poland and France have always been like brothers. In short, the army shouts, 'Russia shall be ours!'

"We cross the frontiers, all the lot of us. We march and better march, but never a Russian do we see. At last all our watchdogs are encamped at Borodino. That was where I received the Cross, and there is no denying that it was a cursed battle. The Emperor was not easy in his mind; he had seen the Red Man, who said to him, 'My child, you are a little too fast for your feet; you will run short of men, and your friends will play you false.'

"Thereupon the Emperor proposes a treaty. But before he signs it, he says to us—

"'Let us give these Russians a drubbing!'

"'All right!' cried the army.

"'Forward!' say the sergeants.

"My clothes were all falling to pieces, my shoes were worn out with trapezing over those roads out there, which are not good going at all. But it is all one. 'Since here is the last of the row,' said I to myself, 'I mean to get all I can out of it.'

"We were posted before the great ravine; we had seats in the front row. The signal is given, and seven hundred guns begin a conversation fit to make the blood spurt from your ears. One should give the Devil his due, and the Russians let themselves be cut in pieces just like Frenchmen; they did not give way, and we made no advance.

"'Forward!' is the cry; 'here is the Emperor!'

"So it was. He rides past us at a gallop, and makes a sign to us that a great deal depends on our carrying the redoubt. He puts fresh heart into us; we rush forward, I am the first man to reach the gorge. Ah! *mon Dieu!* how they fell, colonels, lieutenants, and common soldiers, all alike! There were shoes to fit up those who had none, and epaulettes for the knowing fellows that knew how to write. . . . Victory is the cry all along the line! And, upon my word, there were twenty-five thousand Frenchmen lying on the field. No more, I assure you! Such a thing was never seen before; it was just like a field when the corn is cut, with a man lying there for every ear of wheat. That sobered the rest of us. The Man comes, and we

make a circle round about him, and he coaxes us round (for he could be very nice when he chose), and persuades us to dine with Duke Humphrey, when we were as hungry as hunters. Then our consoler distributes the Crosses of the Legion of Honor himself, salutes the dead, and says to us, 'On to Moscow!'

"'To Moscow, so be it!' says the army.

"We take Moscow. What do the Russians do but set fire to their city! There was a blaze, two leagues of bonfire that burned for two days! The buildings fell about our ears like slates, and molten lead and iron came down in showers; it was really horrible; it was a light to see our sorrows by, I can tell you! The Emperor said, 'There, that is enough of this sort of thing; all my men shall stay here.'

"We amuse ourselves for a bit by recruiting and repairing our frames, for we really were much fatigued by the campaign. We take away with us a gold cross from the top of the Kremlin, and every soldier had a little fortune. But on the way back the winter came down on us a month earlier than usual, a matter which the learned (like a set of fools) have never sufficiently explained; and we are nipped with the cold. We were no longer an army after that, do you understand? There was an end of generals and even of the sergeants; hunger and misery took the command instead, and all of us were absolutely equal under their reign. All we thought of was how to get back to France; no one stooped to pick up his gun or his money; everyone walked straight before him, and armed himself as he thought fit, and no one cared about glory.

"The Emperor saw nothing of his star all the time, for the weather was so bad. There was some misunderstanding between him and Heaven. Poor man! how bad he felt when he saw his Eagles flying with their backs turned on victory! That was really too rough! Well, the next thing is the Beresina. And here and now, my friends, anyone can assure you on his honor, and by all that is sacred, that *never*, no, never since there have been men on earth, never in this world has there been seen such a fricasse of an army, caissons, transports, artillery and all, in such snow as that and under such a pitiless sky. It was so cold that you burned your hand on the barrel of your gun if you happened to touch it. There it was that the pontooners saved the army, for the pontooners stood firm at their posts; it was there that Gondrin behave like a hero, and he is the sole survivor of all the men who were dogged enough to stand in the river so as to build the bridges on which the army crossed over, and so escaped the Russians, who still respected the Grand Army on account of its past victories. And Gondrin is an accomplished soldier," he went on, pointing to his friend, who was gazing at him with rapt attention peculiar to deaf people, "a distinguished soldier who deserves to have your very highest esteem.

"I saw the Emperor standing by the bridge," he went on, "and never feeling the cold at all. Was that, again, a natural thing? He was looking on at the loss of his treasures, of his friends, and those who had fought with him in Egypt. Bah! there was an end of everything. Women and wagons and guns were all engulfed and swallowed up, everything

went to wreck and ruin. A few of the bravest among us saved the Eagles, for the Eagles, look you, meant France, and all the rest of you; it was the civil and military honor of France that was in our keeping, there must be no spot on the honor of France, and the cold should never make her bow her head. There was no getting warm except in the neighborhood of the Emperor; for whenever he was in danger we hurried up, all frozen as we were—we who would not stop to hold out a hand to a fallen friend.

"They say, too, that he shed tears of a night over his poor family of soldiers. Only he and Frenchmen could have pulled themselves out of such a plight; but we did pull ourselves out, though, as I am telling you, it was with loss, ay, and heavy loss. The Allies had eaten up all our provisions; everybody began to betray him, just as the Red Man had foretold. The rattle-pates in Paris, who had kept quiet since the Imperial Guard had been established, think that *he* is dead, and hatch a conspiracy. They set to work in the Home Office to overturn the Emperor. These things come to his knowledge and worry him; he says to us at parting: 'Good-by, children; keep to your posts, I will come back again.'

"Bah! Those generals of his lose their heads at once; for when he was away, it was not like the same thing. The marshals fall out among themselves, and make blunders, as was only natural, for Napoleon in his kindness had fed them on gold till they had grown as fat as butter, and they had no mind to march. Troubles came of this, for many of them stayed inactive in garrison towns in the rear, without attempting to tickle up the backs of the enemy behind us, and we were being driven back on France. But Napoleon comes back among us with fresh troops; conscripts they were, and famous conscripts too; he had put some thorough notions of discipline into them—the whelps were good to set their teeth in anybody. He had a bourgeois guard of honor too, and fine troops they were! They melted away like butter on a gridiron. We may put a bold front on it, but everything is against us, although the army still performs prodigies of valor. Whole nations fought against nations in tremendous battles, at Dresden, Lützen, and Bautzen, and then it was that France showed extraordinary heroism, for you must all of you bear in mind that in those times a stout grenadier only lasted six months.

"We always won the day, but the English were always on our track, putting nonsense into other nations' heads, and stirring them up to revolt. In short, we cleared a way through all these mobs of nations; for wherever the Emperor appeared, we made a passage for him; for on the land as on the sea, whenever he said, 'I wish to go forward,' we made the way.

"There comes a final end to it at last. We are back in France; and in spite of the bitter weather, it did one's heart good to breathe one's native air again, it set up many a poor fellow; and as for me, it put new life into me, I can tell you. But it was a question all at once of defending France, our fair land of France. All Europe was up in arms against us; they took it in bad part that we had tried to keep the Russians in order by driving them back within their own borders, so that they should not

gobble us up, for those Northern folk have a strong liking for eating up the men of the South, it is a habit they have; I have heard the same thing of them from several generals.

"So the Emperor finds his own father-in-law, his friends whom he had made crowned kings, and the rabble of princes to whom he had given back their thrones, were all against him. Even Frenchmen and allies in our own ranks turned against us, by orders from high quarters, as at Leipsic. Common soldiers would hardly be capable of such abominations; yet these princes, as they called themselves, broke their words three times a day! The next thing they do is to invade France. Wherever our Emperor shows his lion's face, the enemy beats a retreat; he worked more miracles for the defense of France than he had ever wrought in the conquest of Italy, the East, Spain, Europe, and Russia; he has a mind to bury every foreigner in French soil, to give them a respect for France, so he lets them come close up to Paris, so as to do for them at a single blow, and to rise to the highest height of genius in the biggest battle that ever was fought, a mother of battles! But the Parisians wanting to save their trumpery skins, and afraid for their two penny shops, open their gates, and there is a beginning of the *ragusades,* and an end of all joy and happiness; they make a fool of the Empress, and fly the white flag out at the windows. The Emperor's closest friends among his generals forsake him at last and go over to the Bourbons, of whom no one had ever heard tell. Then he bids us farewell at Fontainebleau:

"'Soldiers!' . . . (I can hear him yet, we were all crying just like children; the Eagles and the flags had been lowered as if for a funeral. Ah! and it was a funeral, I can tell you; it was the funeral of the Empire; those smart armies of his were nothing but skeletons now.) So he stood there on the flight of steps before his château, and he said—

"'Children, we have been overcome by treachery, but we shall meet again up above in the country of the brave. Protect my child, I leave him in your care. *Long live Napoleon II.!*'

"He had thought of killing himself, so that no one should behold Napoleon after his defeat; like Jesus Christ before the Crucifixion, he thought himself forsaken by God and by his talisman, and so he took enough poison to kill a regiment, but it had no effect whatever upon him. Another marvel! he discovered that he was immortal; and feeling sure of his case, and knowing that he should be Emperor forever, he went to an island for a little while, so as to study the dispositions of those folk who did not fail to make blunder upon blunder. Whilst he was biding his time, the Chinese and the brutes out in Africa, the Moors and what not, awkward customers all of them, were so convinced that he was something more than mortal, that they respected his flag, saying that God would be displeased if anyone meddled with it. So he reigned over all the rest of the world, although the doors of his own France had been closed upon him.

"Then he goes on board the same nutshell of a skiff that he sailed in from Egypt, passes under the noses of the English vessels, and sets foot in France. France recognizes her Emperor, the cuckoo flits from steeple to steeple;

France cries with one voice, 'Long live the Emperor!' The enthusiasm for that Wonder of the Ages was thoroughly genuine in these parts. Dauphiné behaved handsomely; and I was uncommonly pleased to learn that people here shed tears of joy on seeing his gray overcoat once more.

"It was on March 1st that Napoleon set out with two hundred men to conquer the kingdom of France and Navarre, which by March 20th had become the French Empire again. On that day he found himself in Paris, and a clean sweep had been made of everything; he had won back his beloved France, and had called all his soldiers about him again, and three words of his had done it all—'Here am I!' 'Twas the greatest miracle God ever worked! Was it ever known in the world before that a man should do nothing but show his hat, and a whole Empire became his? They fancied that France was crushed, did they? Never a bit of it. A National Army springs up again at the sight of the Eagle, and we all march to Waterloo. There the Guard fall all as one man. Napoleon in his despair heads the rest, and flings himself three times on the enemy's guns without finding the death he sought; we all saw him do it, we soldiers, and the day was lost! That night the Emperor calls all his old soldiers about him, and there on the battlefield, which was soaked with our blood, he burns his flags and his Eagles—the poor Eagles that had never been defeated, that had cried, 'Forward!' in battle after battle, and had flown above us all over Europe. That was the end of the Eagles—all the wealth of England could not purchase for her one tail-father. The rest is sufficiently known.

"The Red Man went over to the Bourbons like the low scoundrel he is. France is prostrate, the soldier counts for nothing, they rob him of his due, send him about his business, and fill his place with nobles who could not walk, they were so old, so that it made you sorry to see them. They seize Napoleon by treachery, the English shut him up on a desert island in the ocean, on a rock ten thousand feet above the rest of the world. That is the final end of it; there he has to stop till the Red Man gives him back his power again, for the happiness of France. A lot of them say that he is dead! Dead? Oh! yes, very likely. They do not know him, that is plain! They go on telling that fib to deceive the people, and to keep things quiet for their tumble-down Government. Listen; this is the whole truth of the matter. His friends have left him alone in the desert to fulfill a prophecy that was made about him, for I forgot to tell you that his name Napoleon really means the *Lion of the Desert*. And that is gospel truth. You will hear plenty of other things said about the Emperor, but they are all monstrous nonsense. Because, look you, to no man of woman born would God have given the power to write his name in red, as he did, across the earth, where he will be remembered forever! . . . Long live 'Napoleon, the father of the soldier, the father of the people!'"

"Long live General Eblé!" cried the pontooner.

"How did you manage not to die in the gorge of the redoubts at Borodino?" asked a peasant woman.

"Do I know? We were a whole regiment when we went down into it, and only a hundred foot were left standing; only infantry could have carried it; for the infantry, look you, is everything in an army——"

"But how about the cavalry?" cried Genestas, slipping down out of the hay in a sudden fashion that drew a startled cry from the boldest.

"Hé, old boy! you are forgetting Poniatowski's Red Lancers, the Cuirassiers, the Dragoons, and the whole boiling. Whenever Napoleon grew tired of seeing his battalions gain no ground towards the end of a victory, he would say to Murat, 'Here, you! cut them in two for me!' and we set out first at a trot, and then at a gallop, *one, two!* and cut a way clean through the ranks of the enemy; it was like slicing an apple in two with a knife. Why, a charge of cavalry is nothing more nor less than a column of cannon balls."

"And how about the pontooners?" cried the deaf veteran.

"There, there! my children," Genestas went on, repenting in his confusion of the sally he had made, when he found himself in the middle of a silent and bewildered group, "there are no agents of police spying here! Here, drink to the Little Corporal with this!"

"Long live the Emperor!" all cried with one voice.

"Hush! children," said the officer, concealing his own deep sorrow with an effort. "Hush! *He is dead.* He died saying, *'Glory, France, and battle.'* So it had to be, children, he must die; but his memory—never!"

Goguelat made an incredulous gesture; then he whispered to those about him, "The officer is still in the service, and orders have been issued that they are to tell the people that the Emperor is dead. You must not think any harm of him, because, after all, a soldier must obey orders."

As Genestas went out of the barn, he heard La Fosseuse say, "That officer, you know, is M. Benassis's friend, and a friend of the Emperor's."

Every soul in the barn rushed to the door to see the commandant again; they saw him in the moonlight, as he took the doctor's arm.

"It was a stupid thing to do," said Genestas. "Quick! let us go into the house. Those Eagles, cannon, and campaigns! . . . I had quite forgotten where I was."

"Well, what do you think of our Goguelat?" asked Benassis.

"So long as such stories are told in France, sir, she will always find the fourteen armies of the Republic within her, at need; and her cannon will be perfectly able to keep up a conversation with the rest of Europe. That is what I think."

A Passion in the Desert

(Une Passion dans de Désert)

"The sight was fearful!" she cried, as we quit M. Martin's menagerie.

She had seen that fearless wild-beast tamer going through his marvelous performance in a cage of hyenas.

"How can it be possible," she went on, "to so tame those creatures as to be sure of them?"

"It is an enigma to you," I replied, "yet still it is naturally a fact."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, her lips quivering incredulously.

"You think, then, that beasts are without feeling?" I asked. "Be assured by me that they are taught by us all of our vices and virtues—those of civilization."

Amazement was expressed in her look.

"At the time I first saw M. Martin, I, like you, exclaimed my amazement," I went on. "It happened that I was seated alongside an old soldier, his right leg amputated, who had attracted my notice by his appearance as I went into the show. His face showed the dauntless look of the Napoleonic wars, disfigured as it was with battle's scars. This old hero, besides, had a frank, jolly style which, wherever I come across it, is always attractive to me. Undoubtedly he was one of those old campaigners who are surprised at nothing, who can make a jest on the last grimaces of a dying comrade, or will bury his friend or rifle his body with gayety; give a challenge to every bullet with composure; make a short shriving for himself or others; and usually, as the rule goes, fraternizing with the Devil. He closely watched the proprietor of the exhibition as he entered the cage, curling his lip, that peculiar sign of contemptuous satire which better informed men assume to signify how superior they are to the dupes. The veteran smiled when I exclaimed at the cool daring of M. Martin, he gave a toss of the head, and, with a knowing grimace, said: 'An old game!'

"'Old game,' said I, 'what do you mean? You will greatly oblige me if you can explain the secret of the mysterious power of this man.'

"We came to be acquainted after a while and went to dine at the first café we saw after quitting the menagerie. After a bottle of champagne with our dessert, which burnished up his memory and rendered it very vivid, he narrated a circumstance in his early history which showed very conclusively that he had ample reason to style M. Martin's performance 'an old game.'"

When we arrived at her house she so teased me, and was withal so charming, making me a number of so pretty promises, that I consented to write the yarn narrated by the veteran hero for her behoof. On the morrow I sent her this adventure, which might well be headed: "The French in Egypt."

During the expedition to Upper Egypt under General Desaix, a Provençal soldier, who had fallen into the clutches of the Maugrabins, was marched by these marauders, these tireless Arabs, into the deserts lying beyond the cataracts of the Nile.

So as to put a sufficient distance between themselves and the French army,

to insure their greater safety, the Maugrabins made forced marches and rested only during the night. They then encamped around a well shaded by palm-trees, under which they had previously concealed a store of provisions. Never dreaming that their prisoner would think of escaping, they satisfied themselves by merely tying his hands, then lay down to sleep, after having regaled themselves on a few dates and given provender to their horses.

When the courageous Provençal noted that they slept soundly and could no longer watch his movements, he made use of his teeth to steal a scimitar, steadied the blade between his knees, cut through the thongs which bound his hands; in an instant he was free. He at once seized a carbine and a long dirk, then took the precaution of providing himself with a stock of dried dates, a small bag of oats, some powder and bullets, and hung a scimitar around his waist, mounted one of the horses and spurred on in the direction in which he supposed the French army to be. So impatient was he to see a bivouac again that he pressed on the already tired courser at such a speed that its flanks were lacerated with the spurs, and soon the poor animal, utterly exhausted, fell dead, leaving the Frenchman alone in the midst of the desert.

After walking for a long time in the sand, with all the courage and firmness of an escaped convict, the soldier was obliged to stop, as the day had already come to an end. Despite the beauty of an Oriental night, with its exquisite sky, he felt that he could not, though he fain would, continue on his weary way. Fortunately he had come to a small eminence, on the summit of which grew a few palm-trees whose verdure shot into the air and could be seen from afar; this had brought hope and consolation to his heart.

His fatigue was so great that he threw himself down on a block of granite capriciously fashioned by Nature into the semblance of a camp-bed, and, without taking any precaution for defense, was soon fast in sleep. He had made the sacrifice of his life. His last waking thought was one of regret. He repented having left the Maugrabins, whose nomad life seemed to smile on him now that he was far from them and from all hope of succor.

He was awakened by the sun, whose pitiless rays fell with their intensest heat on the granite, and produced a most intolerable sense of torridness—for he had most stupidly placed himself inversely to the shadow cast by the verdant and majestic fronds of the palm-trees. He looked at these solitary monarchs and shuddered—they reminded him of the graceful shafts crowned with waving foliage which characterize the Saracenic columns in the cathedral of Arles.

But when, after counting the palm-trees, he cast his eyes around him, the most horrible despair took possession of his soul. The dark, forbidding sands of the desert spread farther than sight could reach in every direction, and glittered with a dull luster like steel struck by light. It was a limitless ocean that he saw. It might have been a sea of ice or a chain of lakes that lay mirrored around him. A fiery vapor carried in streaks formed perpetual heat-waves over this heaving continent. The sky

was glowing with an Oriental splendor of insupportable translucence, disappointing, inasmuch as it leaves naught for the imagination to exceed. Heaven, earth, both were on fire.

The silence was awful in its wild, tremendous majesty. Infinitude, immensity, closed in upon the soul from every side. Not a cloud in the sky, not a breath in the air, not a rift on the bosom of the sand, which was ever moving in ever-diminishing wavelets, scarcely disturbing the surface; the horizon fell into space, traced by a slim line of light, definite as the edge of a saber—like as in summer seas a beam of light just divides the earth from the heaven which meets it.

The Provençal threw his arms around the trunk of one of the palm-trees, as though it were the body of a friend; and there, in the shelter of its slender, straight shadow cast by it upon the granite, he wept. Then sitting down he remained motionless, contemplating with awful dread the implacable scene which Nature stretched out before him. He cried aloud to measure the solitude. His voice, lost in the hollows of the hillocks, sounded in the distance with a faint resonance, but aroused no echo—the echo was in the soldier's heart. The Provençal was two-and-twenty; he loaded his carbine.

"Time enough yet," he muttered to himself, laying on the ground the weapon which alone could give him deliverance.

Looking by turns at the burnished black expanse and the blue immensity of the sky, the soldier dreamed of France—he smelt with delight, in his longing fancy, the gutters of Paris—he remembered the towns through which he had passed, the faces of his fellow-soldiers, the most trivial incidents of his life.

His Southern imagination saw the stones of his dearly loved Provence in the undulating play of the heat which spread in waves over the outspread sheet of the desert. Fearing the dangers of this so cruel mirage, he went down the opposite side of the knoll to that up which he had come on the previous day. How great was his joy when he discerned a natural grotto, formed of immense blocks of granite, the foundation of the rising ground. The remains of a rug showed that this place had at one time been inhabited; a short distance therefrom were some date-palms laden with fruit. There arose in his heart that instinct which binds us to life. He now hoped to live long enough to see the passing of some wandering Arabs, who should pass that way; perhaps, who should say? he might hear the sound of cannon; for at that time Bonaparte was traversing Egypt.

These thoughts inspired him with new life. The palm-tree near him seemed to bend under its weight of ripe fruit. The Frenchman shook down some of the clusters, and, when he tasted the unhoped-for manna, he felt convinced that the palms had been cultivated by some former inhabitant—the rich and luscious flavor of the fresh meat of the dates was an attestation of the care of his unknown predecessor. Like all Provençals, he passed from the gloom of dark despair to an almost insane joy.

He went up again, running, to the top of the hillock, where he devoted the remainder of the day to cutting down

one of the sterile palm-trees which, the previous night, had served him as a shelter. A vague memory made him think of the wild beasts of the desert. He foresaw that they would most likely come to drink at the spring which was visible, bubbling through the sand, at the base of the rock, but lost itself in the desert farther down. He resolved to guard himself against their unwelcome visits to his hermitage by felling a tree which should fall across the entrance.

Despite his diligence and the strength which the dread of being devoured in his sleep lent him, he was unable to cut the palm-tree in pieces during the day, but he was successful in felling it. At eventide the monarch of the desert tumbled down; the noise of its falling resounded far and wide like a moan from Solitude's bosom; the soldier shuddered as though he heard a voice predicting evil.

But like an heir who mourns not his parent's decease, he stripped off from this beautiful tree the arching green fronds, its poetic adornment, and used them in forming a couch on which to rest.

Fatigued by his labors, he soon fell asleep under the red vault of his damp, cool cave.

In the middle of the night his sleep was disturbed by an extraordinary sound. He sat up; the profound silence that reigned around enabled him to distinguish the alternating rhythm of a respiration whose savage energy it was impossible could be that of a human being.

A terrible terror, increased yet more by the silence, the darkness, his racing fancy, froze his heart within him. He felt his hair rise on end, as his eyes, dilated to their utmost, perceived through the gloom two faint amber lights. At first he attributed these lights to the delusion of his vision, but presently the vivid brilliance of the night aided him to gradually distinguish the objects around him in the cave, when he saw, within the space of two feet of him, a huge animal lying at rest. Was it a lion? Was it a tiger? Was it a crocodile?

The Provençal was not sufficiently well educated to know under what subspecies his enemy should be classed; his fear was but the greater because his ignorance led him to imagine every terror at once. He endured most cruel tortures as he noted every variation of the breathing which was so near him; he dared not make the slightest movement.

An odor, pungent like that of a fox, but more penetrating as it were, more profound, filled the cavern. When the Provençal became sensible of this, his terror reached the climax, for now he could no longer doubt the proximity of a terrible companion, whose royal lair he had utilized as a bivouac.

Presently the reflection of the moon, as it slowly descended to the horizon, lighted up the den, rendering gradually visible the gleaming, resplendent, and spotted skin of a panther.

This lion of Egypt lay asleep curled up like a great dog, the peaceful possessor of a kennel at the door of some sumptuous hôtel; its eyes opened for a moment, then closed again; its face was turned toward the Frenchman. A thousand confused thoughts passed through the mind of the tiger's prisoner. Should

he, as he at first thought of doing, kill it with a shot from his carbine? But he saw plainly that there was not room enough in which to take proper aim; the muzzle would have extended beyond the animal—the bullet would miss the mark. And what if it were to awake!—this fear kept him motionless and rigid.

He heard the pulsing of his heart beating in the so dread silence and he cursed the too violent pulsations which his surging blood brought on, lest they should awaken from sleep the dreadful creature—that slumber which gave him time to think and plan over his escape.

Twice did he place his hand upon his scimitar, intending to cut off his enemy's head; but the difficulty of severing the close-haired skin caused him to renounce this daring attempt. To miss was *certain* death. He preferred the chances of a fair fight, and made up his mind to await the daylight. The dawn did not give him long to wait. It came.

He could now examine the panther at his ease; its muzzle was smeared with blood.

"It's had a good dinner," he said, without troubling himself to speculate whether the feast might have been of human flesh or not. "It won't be hungry when it wakes."

It was a female. The fur on her belly and thighs was glistening white. Many small spots like velvet formed beautiful bracelets round her paws; her sinuous tail was also white, ending in black rings. The back of her dress was yellow, like unburnished gold, very lissome and soft, and had the characteristic blotches in the shape of pretty rosettes, which distinguish the panther from every other species *felis*.

This formidable hostess lay tranquilly snoring in an attitude as graceful and easy as that of a cat on the cushions of an ottoman. Her bloody paws, nervous and well armed, were stretched out before her head, which rested on the back of them, while from her muzzle radiated her straight, slender whiskers, like threads of silver.

If he had seen her lying thus, imprisoned in a cage, the Provençal would doubtless have admired the grace of the creature and the vivid contrasts of color which gave her robe an imperial splendor; but just then his sight was jaundiced by sinister forebodings.

The presence of the panther, even asleep, had the same effect upon him as the magnetic eyes of a snake are said to have on the nightingale.

The soldier's courage oozed away in the presence of this silent danger, though he was a man who gathered courage at the mouths of cannon belching forth shot and shell. And yet a bold thought brought daylight to his soul and sealed up the source from whence issued the cold sweat which gathered on his brow. Like men driven to bay, who defy death and offer their bodies to the smiter, so he, seeing in this merely a tragic episode, resolved to play his part with honor to the last.

"The day before yesterday," said he, "the Arabs might have killed me."

So considering himself as already dead, he waited bravely, but with anxious curiosity, the awakening of his enemy.

When the sun appeared the panther suddenly opened her eyes; then she stretched out her paws with energy, as if to get rid of cramp. Presently she yawned and showed the frightful arma-

ment of her teeth, and the pointed tongue rough as a rasp.

"She is like a dainty woman,"[1] thought the Frenchman, seeing her rolling and turning herself about so softly and coquettishly. She licked off the blood from her paws and muzzle, and scratched her head with reiterated grace of movement.

"Good, make your little toilet," said the Frenchman to himself; he recovered his gayety with his courage. "We are presently about to give each other good-morning," and he felt for the short poniard that he had abstracted from the Maugrabins. At this instant the panther turned her head toward him and gazed fixedly at him, without otherwise moving.

The rigidity of her metallic eyes and their insupportable luster made him shudder. The beast approached him; he looked at her caressingly, staring into those bright eyes in an effort to magnetize her—to soothe her. He let her come quite close to him before stirring; then with a movement both gentle and amorous, as though he were caressing the most beautiful of women, he passed his hand over her whole body, from the head to the tail, scratching the flexible vertebræ which divided the yellow back of the panther. The animal slightly moved her tail voluptuously, and her eyes grew soft and gentle; and when for the third time the Frenchman had accomplished this interested flattery, she gave vent to purrings like those by which cats express their pleasure; but they issued from a throat so deep, so powerful, that they resounded through the cave like the last chords of an organ rolling along the vaulted roof of a church. The Provençal, seeing the value of his caresses, redoubled them until they completely soothed and lulled this imperious courtesan.

When he felt assured that he had extinguished the ferocity of his capricious companion, whose hunger had so luckily been appeased the day before, he got up to leave the grotto. The panther let him go out, but when he reached the summit of the little knoll she sprang up and bounded after him with the lightness of a sparrow hopping from twig to twig on a tree, and rubbed against his legs, arching her back after the manner of a domestic cat. Then regarding her guest with eyes whose glare had somewhat softened, she gave vent to that wild cry which naturalists compare to the grating of a saw.

"Madame is exacting," said the Frenchman, smiling.

He was bold enough to play with her ears; he stroked her belly and scratched her head good and hard with his nails. He was encouraged with his success, and tickled her skull with the point of his dagger, watching for an opportune moment to kill her, but the hardness of the bone made him tremble, dreading failure.

The sultana of the desert showed herself gracious to her slave; she lifted her head, stretched out her neck, and betrayed her delight by the tranquillity of her relaxed attitude. It suddenly occurred to the soldier that, to slay this savage princess with one blow, he must stab deep in the throat.

He raised the blade, when the panther, satisfied, no doubt, threw herself grace-

[1] *Petite maîtresse.*

fully at his feet and glanced up at him with a look in which, despite her natural ferocity, a glimmer of good-will was apparent. The poor Provençal, thus frustrated for the nonce, ate his dates as he leaned against one of the palm-trees, casting an interrogating glance from time to time across the desert, in quest of some deliverer, and on his terrible companion, watching the chances of her uncertain clemency.

The panther looked at the place where the date-stones fell; and, each time he threw one, she examined the Frenchman with an eye of commercial distrust. However, the examination seemed to be favorable to him, for, when he had eaten his frugal meal, she licked his boots with her powerful, rough tongue, cleaning off the dust which was caked in the wrinkles in a marvelous manner.

"Ah! but how when she is really hungry?" thought the Provençal. In spite of the shudder caused by this thought, his attention was curiously drawn to the symmetrical proportions of the animal, which was certainly one of the most splendid specimens of its race. He began to measure them with his eye. She was three feet in height at the shoulders and four feet in length, not counting her tail; this powerful weapon was nearly three feet long, and rounded like a cudgel. The head, large as that of a lioness, was distinguished by an intelligent, crafty expression. The cold cruelty of the tiger dominated, and yet it bore a vague resemblance to the face of a wanton woman. Indeed, the countenance of this solitary queen had something of the gayety of a Nero in his cups; her thirst for blood was slaked, now she wished for amusement.

The soldier tried if he might walk up and down, the panther left him freedom, contenting herself with following him with her eyes, less like a faithful dog watching his master's movements with affectionate solicitude, than a huge Angora cat uneasy and suspicious of every movement.

When he looked around he saw, by the spring, the carcass of his horse; the panther had dragged the remains all that distance, and had eaten about two-thirds of it already. The sight reassured the Frenchman, it made it easy to explain the panther's absence and the forbearance she had shown him while he slept.

This first good luck emboldened the soldier to think of the future. He conceived the wild idea of continuing on good terms with his companion and to share her home, to try every means to tame her and endeavor to turn her good graces to his account.

With these thoughts he returned to her side, and had the unspeakable joy of seeing her wag her tail with an almost imperceptible motion as he approached. He sat down beside her, fearlessly, and they began to play together. He took her paws and muzzle, twisted her ears, rolled her over on her back, and stroked her warm, delicate flanks. She allowed him to do whatever he liked, and, when he began to stroke the fur on her feet, she carefully drew in her murderously savage claws, which were sharp and curved like a Damascus sword.

The Frenchman kept one hand on his poniard, and thought to watch his chance to plunge it into the belly of the too confiding animal; but he was fearful lest he might be strangled in her last convulsive struggles; besides this, he

felt in his heart a sort of remorse which bade him respect this hitherto inoffensive creature that had done him no hurt. He seemed to have found a friend in the boundless desert, and, half-unconsciously, his mind reverted to his old sweetheart whom he had, in derision, nicknamed "Mignonne" by way of contrast because she was so furiously jealous; during the whole period of their intercourse he lived in dread of the knife with which she ever threatened him.

This recollection of his youthful days suggested the idea of making the panther answer to this name, now that he began to admire with less fear her graceful swiftness, agility, and softness. Toward the close of the day he had so familiarized himself with his perilous position that he was half in love with his dangerous situation and its painfulness. At last his companion had grown so far tamed that she had caught the habit of looking up at him whenever he called in a falsetto voice "Mignonne."

At the setting of the sun Mignonne, several times in succession, gave a long, deep, melancholy cry.

"She has been well brought up," thought the light-hearted soldier; "she says her prayers." But this jesting thought only occurred to him when he noticed that his companion still retained her pacific attitude.

"Come, my little blonde, I'll let you go to bed first," he said to her, counting on the activity of his own legs to run away as soon as she was asleep; to reach as great distance as possible, and seek some other shelter for the night.

With the utmost impatience the soldier waited the hour of his flight. When it arrived he started off vigorously in the direction of the Nile; but hardly had he made a quarter of a league in the sand when he heard the panther bounding after him; at intervals giving out that saw-like cry which was more terrible than her leaping gait.

"Ah!" said he, "she's fallen in love with me; she has never met anyone before; it is really flattering to be her first love."

So thinking he fell into one of those treacherous quicksands, so menacing to travelers, and from which it is an impossibility to save one's self. Finding himself caught he gave a shriek of alarm. The panther, seizing his collar with her teeth, and springing vigorously backward, drew him as by magic out of the sucking sand.

"Ah, Mignonne!" cried the soldier, enthusiastically kissing her; "we are bound to each other now—for life and death! But no tricks, mind!" and he retraced his steps.

From that time the desert was inhabited for him. It contained a being to whom he could talk and whose ferocity was now lulled into gentleness, although he could not explain to himself this strange friendship. Anxious as he was to keep awake and on guard, as it were, he gradually succumbed to his excessive fatigue of body and mind; he threw himself on the floor of the cave and slept soundly.

On awakening Mignonne was absent; he climbed the hillock and afar off saw her returning in the long bounds characteristic of those animals, who cannot run owning to the extreme flexibility of the vertebral column.

Mignonne arrived with bloody jaws;

she received the wonted caresses, the tribute her slave hastened to pay, and showed by her purring how transported she was. Her eyes, full of languor, rested more kindly on the Provençal than on the previous day, and he addressed her as he would have done a domestic animal.

"Ah! mademoiselle, you're a nice girl, ain't you? Just see now! we like to be petted, don't we? Are you not ashamed of yourself? So you've been eating some Arab or other, eh? well, that doesn't matter. They're animals, the same as you are; but don't take to crunching up a Frenchman, bear that in mind, or I shall not love you any longer."

She played like a dog with its master, allowing herself to be rolled over, knocked about, stroked, and the rest, alternately; at times she would coax him to play by putting her paw upon his knee and making a pretty gesture of solicitation.

Some days passed in this manner. This companionship allowed the Provençal to properly appreciate the sublime beauties of the desert. He had now discovered in the rising and setting of the sun sights utterly unknown to the world. He knew what it was to tremble when over his head he heard the hiss of a bird's wing, which occurred so rarely, or when he saw the clouds changing like many-colored travelers melting into each other. In the night-time he studied the effects of the moon upon the ocean of sand, where the simoom made waves swift of movement and rapid in their changes. He lived the life of the East; he marveled at its wonderful pomp; then, after having reveled in the sight of a hurricane over the plain where the madly whirling sands made red, dry mists, and death-bearing clouds, he would welcome the night with joy, for then fell the blissful freshness of the light of the stars, and he listened to imaginary music in the skies.

Thus solitude taught him to unroll the treasures of dreams. He passed long hours in remembering mere nothings—trifles, and comparing his past life with the present.

In the end he grew passionately fond of his panther; for some sort of affection was a necessity.

Whether it was that his own will powerfully projected had modified that of his companion, or whether, because she had found abundant food in her predatory excursions in the desert, she respected the man's life, he feared no longer for it, for she became so exceedingly tame.

Most of his time he devoted to sleep, but he was compelled to watch like a spider in its web, that the moment of his deliverance might not escape him, in case any should come his way over that line marked by the horizon. His shirt he had sacrificed in the making of a flag, which he attached to the top of a palm-tree from which he had torn the foliage. Taught by necessity, he found the means of keeping it spread out, by fastening twigs and wedges to the corners; for the fitful breeze might not be blowing at the moment when the passing traveler was looking over the desert.

Nevertheless there were long hours of gloom, when he had abandoned hope; then he played with his panther. He had come to understand the different inflexions of her voice, the expression of

her eyes; he had studied the capricious patterns of the rosettes that marked her golden robe. Mignonne was not even angry when he took hold of the tuft at the end of her tail to count the black and white rings, those graceful ornaments which glistened in the sun like precious gems. It afforded him pleasure to contemplate the supple, lithe, soft lines of her lissome form, the whiteness of her belly, the graceful poise of her head. But it was especially when she was playing that he took the greatest pleasure in looking at her. The agility and youthful lightness of her movements were a continual wonder to him. He was amazed at the supple way in which she bounded, crept, and glided, or clung to the trunk of palm-trees, or rolled over, crouching sometimes to the ground and gathering herself together for her mighty spring; how she washed herself and combed down her fur. He noted that however vigorous her spring might be, however slippery the block of granite upon which she landed, she would stop, motionless, at the one word "Mignonne."

One day, under a bright midday sun, a great bird hovered in the sky. The Provençal left his panther to gaze at this new guest; but after pausing for a moment the deserted sultana uttered a deep growl.

"God take me! I do believe that she is jealous," he cried, seeing the rigid look appearing again in the metallic eyes. "The soul of Virginie has passed into her body, that's sure!"

The eagle disappeared in the ether, and the soldier admired the panther again, recalled by her evident displeasure, her rounded flanks, and the perfect grace of her attitude. She was as pretty as a woman. There were youth and grace in her form. The blond fur of her robe shaded, with delicate gradations, to the dead-white tones of her furry thighs; the vivid sunshine brought out in its fullness the brilliancy of this living gold and its variegated brown spots with indescribable luster.

The Provençal and the panther looked at each other with a look pregnant with meaning. She trembled with delight (the coquettish creature) when she felt her friend scratch the strong bones of her skull with his nails. Her eyes glittered like lightning-flashes—then she closed them tightly.

"She has a soul!" cried he, looking at the stillness of this queen of the sands, golden like them, white as their waving light, solitary and burning as themselves.

"Well," said she, "I have read your defense of the beasts, but now tell me the end of this friendship between two beings who seemed to understand each other so thoroughly."

"Ah! there you are!" I replied. "It finished as all great passions end—by a misunderstanding. I believe that both sides imagine treachery; pride prevents an explanation, the rupture comes to pass through obstinacy."

"And sometimes on pleasant occasions," said she, "a glance, a word, an exclamation is all-sufficient. Well, tell me the end of the story."

"That is horribly difficult. But you will understand it the better if I give it you in the words of the old veteran, as he finished the bottle of champagne and exclaimed:

"'I don't know how I could have hurt her, but she suddenly turned on me in

a fury, seizing my thigh with her sharp teeth, and yet (I thought of this afterward) not cruelly. I imagined that she intended devouring me, and I plunged my poniard in her throat. She rolled over with a cry that rent my soul; she looked at me in her death-struggle, but without anger. I would have given the whole world—my cross, which I had not yet gained, all, everything—to restore her life to her. It was as if I had assassinated a real human being, a friend. When the soldiers who had seen my flag came to my rescue they found me in tears. Ah! well, monsieur,' he resumed, after a momentary pause, eloquent by its silence, 'I went through the wars in Germany, Spain, Russia, and France; I have marched my carcass well-nigh the world over, but I have seen nothing comparable to the desert. Ah! it is most beautiful! glorious!'

"'What were your feelings there?' I asked.

"'They cannot be told, young man. Besides, I do not always regret my panther, my bouquet of palms. I must, indeed, be sad for that. In the desert, see you, there is all, and there is nothing.'

"'But wait!—explain that!'

"'Well, then,' he replied, with an impatient gesture, 'God is there, man is not.'"